WHITE MEN CAN'T JUMP

by Ron Shelton

1-25-91

First Draft

Producers: David Lester
Don Miller

Executive Producer: Michele Rappaport

The accapella sounds of two male voices, in two part harmony, singing slowly, beautifully but slightly drunkenly, "Ebb Tide".

THE VOICES
First the tide rushes in,
plants a kiss on the shore,
Then rolls out to sea and the sea
is very still once more...

FADE IN:

EXT. VENICE BEACH CALIFORNIA - DAWN

The nearly deserted boardwalk before the sun is out, before there is life at the beach.

TWO VOICES (cont'd)
At last we're face to face,
And as we kiss through an embrace,
I can tell, I can feel,
You are love, you are real...

ANGLE ON - TRASH SPILLING FROM THE RECEPTACLES, nearly obscuring the sign that reads: "Keep your beach clean".

ANGLE ON - THE PUBLIC RESTROOM where two men stir slightly, exchanging something. A cigarette? Drugs? A match? It doesn't matter.

ANGLE ON - THE WEIGHTLIFTING AREA where another homeless man sleeps on the bench.

ANGLE ON WINDWARD AVENUE - A beat up old American car pulls up. Early 70's gas guzzler, carrying plenty of bond-o and an Earl Scheib paint job. The green Oldsmobile parks under a "No Parking" sign, and:

A YOUNG MAN GETS OUT - In his 20's, a bit shaggy with dirty brown/blonde hair, he goes to the trunk, opens it, removes a canvas athletic bag that has seen better days, and wanders down to:

THE BASKETBALL COURT - Deserted, still early.

CLOSE ON THE YOUNG MAN - He looks around unfamiliarly. This is Billy, 25, a drifter who could be an oilfield worker, a carpenter, a small time thief, or just another member of the hard core unemployed.

HIS P.O.V. - TWO MEN SINGING, one sitting, one standing, near the basketball court.

THE TWO MEN - They call themselves SAM AND DAVE, both black, in their 60's, they know the "Sam and Dave" repertoire by heart. A HAT FOR DONATIONS sits in front of them.

SAM AND DAVE
Really mine in the rain,
In the dark, in the sun,
Like the tide at its ebb,
I'm at peace in the web of your arms...

BILLY DROPS SOME CHANGE in their hat as they finish.

BILLY
Excuse me...is this the Venice Beach courts? I mean this is the only one?

SAM
This is the only one.

BILLY
This is where Eddie "The King" Faroo and Duck Johnson used to play?

DAVE
Ohyeah...King and Duck owned these courts. They were the best ever played here...

BILLY
That's 'cause you never saw me...

SAM AND DAVE LOOK AT BILLY as if he's crazy, and smile.

BILLY (cont'd)
Keep singing, it sounds good...

BILLY SITS DOWN ALONE on a bench facing the court. He stares at the empty courts in the morning fog. He pulls a basketball from his bag, sets it on the bench, then--

HE LIES DOWN USING THE BALL AS A PILLOW - The most uncomfortable pillow we can imagine, but--

WE MOVE IN CLOSE ON HIS FACE, HIS EYES and he drifts to sleep as Sam and Dave do another chorus.

<u>The sounds of Sam and Dave "ooh and aahhing through Ebb Tide</u>.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SAME VENICE BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Bang. Action. A game in progress, with several games on several courts in the b.g. The players are mostly black, and on the main court, entirely black.

TWENTY PEOPLE WATCH from the sidelines. Some are players waiting for a game, some are girlfriends, some just fans.

BILLY WATCHES FROM THE BENCH as the action heats up.

THE GAME - FOUR ON FOUR featuring players from late teens to early thirties. One player, in particular, stands out--SIDNEY, mid-20's, as more arrogant, louder, cockier than the others, who are arrogant, loud, and cocky enough.

SIDNEY ON DEFENSE AGAINST WALTER, a powerfully built player.

SIDNEY
(taunting outrageously)
C'mon, Walter, c'mon an' throw that big butt at me--yeah... I'm gettin' tired of makin' you look bad, Walter...

WALTER
In your face--

SIDNEY
A man gets tired makin' another man look bad--it's hard work, Walter, hard Goddamn work...

His non-stop rap gets under Walter's skin, which is its intention. Walter gets a look in his eye, and calls for the ball with authority.

WALTER
Gimme the ball!

A TEAMMATE PASSES THE BALL to Walter at the top of the key. He gets low, holding the ball just off the ground. Sidney gets low in a defensive crouch. The two men's faces are inches apart--eye to eye.

SIDNEY
You got the rock now, Walter, what you gonna do with it? You ain't gonna shoot it from there 'cause you know I'd knock it outta the fuckin' sky and you ain't takin' me to the hole 'cause you ain't good enough...

CLOSE ON WALTER - A look in his eyes. They flare. His pride and ego challenged, he speaks right at Sidney.

WALTER
In your face, you big mouthed nigger--

WALTER TAKES A QUICK DRIBBLE LEFT - Then crosses to his right and makes a POWERFUL MOVE DOWN THE LANE through the other players, taking the ball all the way to the hoop. Sidney matches him step for step, until--

WALTER EXPLODES TO THE HOOP - A big man, up, and up until he's fully extended to slam the ball through the hoop, but:

SIDNEY SKIES LIKE A GAZELLE - Up and up even higher and in one resounding swat--

SIDNEY REJECTS THE SLAM - Blasting the ball off Walter's face where it bounces away. Walter lands on his back. And the crowd roars its approval.

SIDNEY SLAPS FIVES with all the players, including the ones on Walter's own team. He's insufferable in victory, but funny. Somehow he doesn't take himself too seriously. He's a kind of poor man's, playground Muhammed Ali.

SIDNEY
(as he slaps fives)
Yes, Walter, Yes, Yes, Yes.
It's hard Goddamn work makin'
you look so bad...

WALTER PICKS HIMSELF UP SLOWLY, his dignity damaged along with his ankle. He limps and hobbles, testing his ankle.

WALTER
Take the ball out and shut up.

ANOTHER PLAYER ON SIDNEY'S TEAM picks up the ball and starts to pass it in from the baseline. This is JUNIOR, 20, who plays with a cap on backwards.

JUNIOR
What's the count?

GEORGE, ONE OF WALTER'S TEAMMATES, ANSWERS as he takes defensive position on Junior.

GEORGE
9-8...us.

JUNIOR
9-8 you? It's 9-8 <u>us</u>.

GEORGE
You can't fuckin' count, Junior--
if you could count you'd be
a astronaut--

SIDNEY
Your mother's an astronaut!

GEORGE
(flaring wildly)
My mother ain't no astronaut!

GEORGE GRABS SIDNEY but Sidney pulls away and raises his fist.

SIDNEY
Get your fuckin' hands off me!

THE TWO MEN SQUARE OFF and suddenly the rest of the players try to pull them off each other.

GEORGE
My mother ain't no astronaut--say it!

SIDNEY
Your mother ain't no astronaut--
Your father ain't no astronaut--
Your brother ain't no astronaut--
there ain't no fuckin' astronauts
got anything to do with anything,
okay?

GEORGE
Okay.

SIDNEY
Saying your mother is a astronaut
is just a way of saying you're
fucked up, okay?!

GEORGE
Just so you keep my fuckin' mother
outta this--

SIDNEY
She's out, man, she's out--
(beat)
Now what's the fuckin' score?

GEORGE
9-8, us.

JUNIOR
You can't possibly be winnin' 'cause if we lose to you then I'd go kill myself and I don't wanta kill myself.

GEORGE
(a throwaway)
Fuck you...

JUNIOR
Fuck this!

GEORGE
Fuck you!

JUNIOR
Fuck this!

SIDNEY
Shut up! You guys give me a Excedrin number fuckin' trillion headache!

A quick, short silence.

SIDNEY TURNS to the closest player on the sidelines to ask for arbitration--a common practise. The closest player, sitting silently, is white--Billy.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Hey you, Chump! What's the score?

Silence and no movement from Billy.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
You deaf? You, <u>you</u>--I'm talking to fuckin' air?

When Billy speaks, it is slowly and calmly.

BILLY
My name ain't "Chump". My name is Billy Hoyt.

SIDNEY
Billy Hoyt. Good. You count to ten, Billy Hoyt?

BILLY
Yeah.

SIDNEY
Then what's the score?

BILLY
I don't know.

SIDNEY
Then you're a chump.

BILLY
I may be a chump--I just said it wasn't my name.

SIDNEY
Well fuck you...

SIDNEY TURNS HIS ATTENTION back to the game.

GEORGE
Call it 8-8, we'll go from here. Your ball.

SIDNEY
Hell no, it's 9-8 you. I don't want no excuses...

GEORGE
I'm giving you the point! We'll call it even!

SIDNEY
You don't give me shit! I don't want no points. Let's go.

But just before the game resumes, we hear:

A WOMAN'S VOICE CALLS OUT - Calling for Sidney.

RHONDA (O.S.)
Sidney!

SIDNEY'S P.O.V. - A BEAUTIFUL BLACK WOMAN, late 20's, holding a small child, near the court. Dressed well, she's looking for her husband--Sidney.

SIDNEY
Just a minute.

GEORGE
Old lady on your case, eh?

SIDNEY GOES TO RHONDA at the edge of the court, and takes the baby in his arms gently. Suddenly, a different side of Sidney emerges. He's not the smart mouthed street hustler he first appears--or at least he's more than that.

SIDNEY
Hi, baby...

RHONDA
I'm sorry to bother you here but I was buying groceries and the check didn't clear. I got no cash...

SIDNEY PULLS OUT A TWENTY and hands it to her.

SIDNEY
Will a twenty help?

RHONDA
Help a lot.

SIDNEY
I've got some things kicking in-- we're gonna be okay.

SHE KISSES HIM on the cheek.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
See ya for dinner.

HE KISSES THE BABY and hands his son back to his wife, and as she leaves--

SIDNEY RETURNS TO THE COURT - Resuming his brash character at once, without losing a beat.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Okay, let's run...

SIDNEY TAKES THE BALL to throw it in from out of bounds but there's a delay. Walter is limping badly.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
What's wrong with you?

WALTER
I can't run, man...get somebody step in for me.

WALTER HOBBLES TOWARD the bench. Sidney motions to the many players on the sidelines.

SIDNEY
Somebody step in for the handicapped. Anybody, don't matter.
(pointing to Billy)
Billy here.

GEORGE
We don't want him.

SIDNEY
You never saw him play before--
he might be good.

GEORGE
We don't want him anyway.

Sidney knows why Billy is unwanted--he's white, of course--but plays the moment as if he doesn't.

SIDNEY
Why not?

Billy pipes in.

BILLY
'Cause I'm white.

GEORGE
'Cause he's white.

SIDNEY
You could get Bernard King, it
wouldn't matter--I'm hitting two
and we're outta here.

BILLY STANDS UP and stretches briefly.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
No reason gettin' loose. Just
come over here and pretend to
play some D--I won't embarrass you.
Two quick ones and it's over.

GEORGE
(to Billy)
Get in there--anything to get
Sidney to shut up.

BILLY AMBLES SLOWLY over toward Sidney and takes a position two or three feet from him, on defense.

THE GAME RESUMES - Sidney holds the ball over his head to signal a return to action. He slaps the ball, and:

SIDNEY INBOUNDS THE BALL TO JUNIOR who passes it quickly to ANOTHER PLAYER who reverses it--

BACK TO SIDNEY AS HE BREAKS to the outside for the pass.

SIDNEY GETS THE PASS and immediately goes up for an eighteen foot jumper, but--

BILLY STRIPS THE BALL FROM SIDNEY on the way up, leaving Sidney in the air, shooting position, without the ball, as--

BILLY TAKES TWO QUICK DRIBBLES to free himself and goes up for a fifteen foot jumper himself, but at the top of his shot, suddenly--

BILLY DRILLS A PASS UNDERNEATH to his waiting teammate, George, who has an easy lay-in.

A chorus of "whoas" from the players aimed at Sidney.

GEORGE
Nice pass, man.

BILLY SMILES AT SIDNEY without rubbing it in.

BILLY
I think the score is 9-8, ours.

SIDNEY
Shut the fuck up.

BILLY GOES TO THE TOP OF THE KEY to inbound the ball. And this time Sidney gets right in his face, more intense than we saw him with Walter. Suddenly, it's his pride that's on the line.

SIDNEY
Okay, Chump, the sun even shines on a dog's ass some days. Any body can win the lottery, you hear what I'm saying?

BILLY IS UNPERTURBED - He inbounds the ball to George.

GEORGE LOOKS FOR A SHOT - Everybody always looks for the shot on the playground. He stutter steps one with with a quick dribble, reverses, cut off, he gives the ball back to Billy.

BILLY STARTS ONE DIRECTION looking for a pick. He gets one. Sidney is all over him--clearly when he shuts up and plays, Sidney is a real talent.

BILLY DRIBBLES TO HIS RIGHT, looking for an opening, and suddenly, with surprise--

BILLY FIRES A BEHIND THE BACK PASS through the key, past all the players caught off guard, to his teammate cutting for the basket, and--

BILLY'S TEAMMATE SLAMS IT THROUGH - Game's over.

THEY ALL SLAP BILLY'S HAND - Two great passes.

Sidney, however, is livid--he speaks to Billy.

SIDNEY
Your mother's an astronaut too...

BILLY
My mother was too drunk to be an astronaut...

SIDNEY
You're too stupid to know when you're bein' insulted, Mr. Brady Bunch--

BILLY LAUGHS - This further infuriates Sidney, not because Billy's laugh is a taunt, but because he enjoys the humor.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Why you laughing?

BILLY
Callin' me "Brady Bunch".

GEORGE
C'mon, Sidney, get off the court. You lost.

SIDNEY
Gimme two minutes with Brady Bunch, here--
(in Billy's face)
Just 'cause you pull a couple passes outta your ass don't mean you can play this game.

BILLY
You're right, Sidney--you ain't seen me shoot. Maybe I can't shoot a lick.
(beat)
You're the King of this Playground and I'm just another another mechanical honkie, knows the X's and O's, good fundamentals, can't jump...
(beat)
What's it worth to you to find out?

BILLY REACHES INTO HIS POCKET - He pulls a wad of cash out of it and quickly calculates.

BILLY (cont'd)
There's forty, fifty-five, sixty-two dollars...
(beat)
Match the money and name the game. I wanta find out how good you are...
(beat)
...Chump.

SIDNEY
Only problem I got is how I'm gonna get the ball from outta your ass after I take your money...

SIDNEY PULLS SOME CASH from his own pocket and counts.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Forty-one dollars. Junior! Got a twenty?

JUNIOR
Always takin' my money, Sid--

SIDNEY
You'll get it back--

JUNIOR RELUCTANTLY HANDS A TWENTY to Sidney, mumbling...

JUNIOR
Y'always say that--

SIDNEY
George, hold this.

GEORGE HOLDS THE CASH from each player.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Best of five shots--top of the key. You go first.

BILLY PICKS UP THE BALL - He spins it again, dribbles close to the ground, getting the feel of it.

BILLY GOES TO THE TOP OF THE KEY and takes his position. Sidney starts talking trash immediately.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
This outdoor game ain't like the country club shit you're used to. Gotta account for the wind when you shoot--here at the beach the wind can move the ball six, eight inches...

CLOSE ON BILLY - He smiles, and lofts a high, arching shot.

SWISH - Good. Nothing but the chain net rattles as the ball goes through.

SIDNEY GRABS THE BALL - And quickly he shoots.

SWISH - Good.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Pretty. God it's pretty...

BILLY SILENTLY PICKS UP THE BALL - He dribbles a couple times and fires.

GOOD - Not so cleanly but good nonetheless.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Ugly shot. Looked like a brick.
Gimme the rock...

SIDNEY TAKES THE BALL - Quickly, again, he fires.

SWISH - Good again. Two to two.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Oughta be a law against bein'
this good. A man has a cross to
bear, you understand what I'm saying...

AND EACH PLAYER TAKES THEIR NEXT TWO SHOTS as Sidney continues his rap, never shutting up, even as he shoots.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Magic came by here once and I took
him to the hole, y'hear that? Took
Earvin to the hole...said I should
be in the summer Pro League at
Cal State but I said no, might
be hurt, mess up my game...

SWISH, SWISH, SWISH, SWISH - The next four shots are made, tying the score at four. One shot left each.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Ain't easy bein' this pretty...

BILLY
Shut the fuck up.

SIDNEY
Rabbit ears, eh? Starting to
get to ya?

BILLY TAKES THE BALL for his last shot.

BILLY
No, Sidney, you ain't getting to me. You're just making my eardrums hurt.
(beat)
Fact is, there ain't no pressure on me 'cause you all think I'm a chump which is fine with me 'cause you look at the droopy socks hanging around my ankles and you think that means I can't play 'cause it never occurred to you that maybe I work hard at the droopy socks look 'cause I know then you'll think I can't play and you'll relax on defense and I'll gain a half step on you--
(beat)
But no, you don't think of that. Fact is, if I'm a chump then I miss this shot and I walk away, I'm still a chump.

BILLY LOFTS A SHOT at the bucket.

SWISH - The chains just flicker as the ball goes through.

BILLY (cont'd)
But if <u>you</u> miss, you've been beaten twice by a slow, white man who maybe can jump and maybe can't--

SIDNEY
Shut the fuck up!

BILLY
I noticed a little wind on my last shot, Sidney, you might wanta adjust a little...maybe 6-8 inches to the left...
(beat)
It's no big deal, Sid...I've hustled a lot better players than you...don't put up no brick, now...

SIDNEY LAUNCHES A SHOT - A brick. The ball hits the front edge of the rim and clangs away harmlessly.

BILLY
Brick.

SIDNEY
Motherfucker!

SIDNEY GOES AFTER BILLY - But his teammates and buddies quickly pull him back.

GEORGE
Sidney, Sidney, cool it!

JUNIOR
(to Billy)
Don't push your luck, man--

BILLY
Got nothing to do with luck.

BILLY GRABS THE MONEY FROM GEORGE - There's no resistance. There's even some taunting of Sidney from his buddies, though the loyalties are clearly expressed. Billy has gained their respect--but he's an outsider.

AND BILLY WALKS AWAY from the playground, picking up his bag and ball as he does.

CUT TO:

INT. SEA CAPTAIN'S MOTEL - DAY

BILLY ENTERS A ROOM in the modest motel left over from the 50's, a motel that is doomed to give way to the wrecker's ball and turn into a pod mall of Chinese Fast Food and yet more video rental boutiques.

BILLY TOSSES A BAG OF FAST FOOD onto the bed, and empties his new earnings next to the bag, in front of--

A WOMAN - GLORIA, 20's, who sits on the bed wearing an oversized T-shirt, and panties. The bed is covered with open books and newspapers. Also, a bottle of vodka sits on the night table and a half full glass is in her hand.

BILLY
Sixty-two dollars less five-sixteen for a fish sandwich, double cheese, two fries, a shake and a coke.

GLORIA
(calculating instantly)
That's, uh...fifty-eight eighty four... which makes...eight hundred and six dollars towards the three thousand--
(quickly)
We still owe the Boocher Boys two-thousand-one-hundred-ninety-four bucks.

BILLY
We don't give them a dime if ya ask me--they're holding you up.

GLORIA
Billy, there's some things in life that just are the way they are. And nothing's gonna get rid of the Boocher Boys except three thousand more dollars.

He grunts.

SHE WRITES IN A SMALL NOTEBOOK - Keeping copious daily records of very small entries.

BILLY TAKES THE GLASS OF VODKA from her hand and places it on the dresser.

GLORIA
I'm not drinking much, really--
I've been studying all day...
(beat)
Try me, Billy, anything--

BILLY STARTS UNDRESSING from the clothes he's been playing basketball in.

SHE HANDS HIM A WORLD ALMANAC - Opened to a page.

GLORIA (cont'd)
Ask me Fire or Earthquakes...I did disasters today--and assassinations! Try assassinations.

BILLY
Okay...
(reading)
Leon Czolgosz.

GLORIA
Who killed President McKinley?

BILLY
You're unbelievable.

GLORIA
Jeopardy's gonna call, Billy, I know it.

BILLY
Don't count on it--then you won't be disappointed.

GLORIA
At the regional search for contestants in New Jersey I clammed up--even though I passed the screening tests, the truth is I clammed up. I can do better.

BILLY
You won't clam up.

GLORIA
I'm through clamming. I'm through being poor.
(beat)
Since I took over our finances, you gotta admit things have been better?

SHE PULLS A JAR FROM UNDER THE PILLOW - The jar is filled with cash. She unscrews the lid and stuffs the new money in with the accumulated cash.

BILLY
Much better this way, much better.

GLORIA
How much do you love me?

As he undresses.

BILLY
I love you infinity.

GLORIA
That's not enough.

BILLY
Infinity's the biggest number there is.

GLORIA
No it's not.

BILLY
Tell me one number bigger than infinity.

GLORIA
Infinity plus two.

BILLY
Then I love you infinity plus two.

GLORIA
Now that I've taught you the concept of infinity, you should have said "I love you infinity plus infinity".

Billy stares at her. He's down to his jock strap and, though he has endless patience for Gloria, his limit is frequently tested.

SHE STARES AT HIM standing there in his jock strap. He fishes his burger from the bag and takes a big bite.

BILLY
Gloria--I love you infinity plus infinity.

GLORIA
There's a bigger number than that.

BILLY
(with all sincerity)
What is it?

GLORIA
I'm not telling you.

HE DEVOURS THE BURGER in about three bites.

BILLY
I give up.

GLORIA
You haven't kissed me yet.

HE KISSES HER - She licks the sauce from his face.

BILLY
I gotta shower. Be right back...

BILLY HEADS FOR THE SHOWER and she continues reading the newspaper.

GLORIA REACHES FOR THE VODKA BOTTLE after checking the bathroom to make sure Billy can't see, and--

SHE POURS HERSELF ANOTHER DRINK, tossing it down quickly.

There's a knock at the door.

GLORIA LEAPS INTO THE BATHROOM - Terrified.

IN THE BATHROOM - She pulls the curtain back. Her face is covered with fear.

GLORIA
Billy, Billy! Somebody's here!

BILLY QUICKLY CLIMBS OUT OF THE SHOWER, grabs a towel, and throws open the bathroom window.

BILLY
Calm down. Shut the bathroom door. If I don't call your name in 30 seconds, take off out there.
(beat)
There's a Denny's on Pico. I'll find you.

Another knock at the door.

BILLY (cont'd)
Lock the door.

BILLY CLOSES THE BATHROOM DOOR - He goes to the bedroom door, somewhat warily, and speaks.

BILLY (cont'd)
Who is it?

VOICE O.S.
The manager.

Billy tries to peek out the curtain but there's not a clear view of whoever's knocking.

BILLY
What'ya want?

VOICE O.S.
I have a message for you.

BILLY OPENS THE DOOR a few inches and stares out at--

SIDNEY THE KING OF THE PLAYGROUND - He's changed clothes.

SIDNEY
Brady Bunch.

BILLY
What the hell you want?

SIDNEY
Wanta talk.

BILLY LOOKS OUTSIDE - He's come alone, so Billy motions him inside.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BATHROOM

GLORIA LISTENS CLOSELY at the door. She can't hear anything, she's looking closely at her watch.

GLORIA
...28...29...30!

AND SHE CLIMBS OUT THE WINDOW - And takes off running.

CLOSE ON THE WINDOW - It falls shut with a slam.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BEDROOM

BILLY HEARS THE WINDOW SLAM shut and runs to the bathroom.

BILLY
Oh shit!

HE THROWS OPEN THE BATHROOM DOOR and rips up the window.

P.O.V. GLORIA RUNNING ACROSS and empty lot.

BILLY (cont'd)
Gloria! Come back! It's okay!

BACK TO SIDNEY - He's checking out the room.

HIS P.O.V. BILLY SCREAMING OUT THE BATHROOM WINDOW trying to retrieve his girlfriend.

SIDNEY
You got problems?

BILLY
This is a pretty normal day for me. How'd you know I was here?

SIDNEY
I asked around. Nobody ever worked me at the beach like you did before.

BILLY
Let's make something clear. You put down money. I beat you. If you beat me, I don't show up to cry about it.

BILLY PULLS A GUN FROM HIS BASKETBALL BAG - Hidden among his gear, sneakers, jockstraps, etc.

SIDNEY LEAPS BACKWARDS - What's he got into?

BILLY (cont'd)
Don't fuck with me.

SIDNEY
I'm here on business.

GLORIA CLIMBS BACK IN THROUGH THE BATHROOM WINDOW - Sweating and breathing heavily.

GLORIA
Thirty seconds! I didn't hear nothing for thirty seconds so I took off!
(beat)
Who's he?

SIDNEY
Sidney Green. Your boyfriend took some of my money today.

GLORIA
If you try to take it back he'll shoot you. Or I will.

SIDNEY
I'm hip.

Sidney takes a deep breath. He's much calmer, cooler here. We sense that part of his playground routine--the hyper, trash talking blacker than thou, more outrageous than thou character--is at least partly an act.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Where you from and where'd you play?

BILLY
New Jersey. I scored 35 a game in high school. Got a full ride to Tulane University but had to go to Shit and Piss Junior College in Texas to get my grades up--

GLORIA
He was great in J.C.

BILLY
I scored 28 a game as a freshman, transferred to Tulane...but things didn't work out there too well...

SIDNEY
And you been hustling ever since?

GLORIA
He's keeping us alive till Jeopardy calls.

BILLY
Nobody knows me in California--I can work the courts a little--

SIDNEY
If you're running from the cops, tell me now 'cause I want no part of it. If it's bill collectors, welcome to the planet Earth.

GLORIA
It's not the cops.

SIDNEY
Then I'm here to make a business proposal. There could be a lot more than this chump change you're making now.

BILLY
What is it?

SIDNEY
There's a 2 on 2 tournament next week sponsored by some businesses--first prize is five grand and my partner got hurt.

BILLY
You asking me to run with you?

SIDNEY
Yeah.
(beat)
But between now and then, you and me could make some quick money if you don't mind hustling and I <u>know</u> you don't mind hustling.

BILLY
What kind of hustle?

SIDNEY
We exploit the basic rule of the playground.

GLORIA
What's that?

SIDNEY
When choosing teams--
(beat)
--never pick the white guy.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE 42nd STREET PLAYGROUND - NEXT DAY

RAYMOND DIXON, 38, SKIES AND SLAMS a ball through the hoop. He's huge--at least 6'7" He's the real king of the playground. A quick, big, explosive, fluid athlete. A bit over the hill but enormously skilled. A game in progress, that includes Sidney.

SIDNEY
C'mon, Raymond, I'm gettin' tired of makin' you look bad--a man gets tired makin' another man look so bad...

RAYMOND
Who the fuck told you to talk. You score, you can talk. You shut me down, you can talk. You eat shit, you shut up.

SIDNEY
You took me to the hole 'cause I let you take me to the hole.

RAYMOND
I take you anywhere I want anytime I want--I have you for breakfast.

SIDNEY
You wanta put some jack on breakfast? You pick any player you want. Two on two.

RAYMOND
Who rattled your cage, dickhead?

SIDNEY
I'm just sick of your bullshit.

RAYMOND DIXON LOOKS AROUND like this punk has lost his mind. Nobody bad mouths Raymond Dixon, certainly not after a monster slam.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
I tell you what. I can take any man here--I'll take the worst fuckin' player here--and you take who you want...

RAYMOND
You're fuckin' crazy.

SIDNEY
...and play you to fifteen by ones for five hundred dollars.

RAYMOND
What you been smokin', man? Who is this guy? You may be big at the Beach but we play some ball here.

SIDNEY
Then put your fuckin' money down.

SIDNEY PULLS A STACK OF MONEY from his pocket and flashes it wildly.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Who you wanta run with me--you pick any man here.

RAYMOND
I don't believe this.

SIDNEY
Five hundred. You pick my teammate. Anybody here...<u>anybody</u>--

A COUPLE OF LEWIS' TEAMMATES START LAUGHING and encourage Lewis to shut up this upstart.

TEAMMATE
Raymond, Raymond--look't that chump over there--give 'im the chump.

P.O.V. BILLY SITTING ALONE ON THE SIDELINE - He's dressed even goofier than before.

SIDNEY
Not him, Raymond--white man don't count. Gimme a brother...

RAYMOND
Him. The goofy looking guy.

BILLY
Me?

SIDNEY
I'm fucked.

RAYMOND
Hey Chump--you wanta run?

CLOSE ON BILLY - He looks awkward. A brilliant hustle.

BILLY
You mean play basketball?

THEY ALL LAUGH - And we see--

CUT TO:

INT. BILLY'S CAR ACROSS THE STREET - DAY

GLORIA SITS WATCHING the playground, enjoying the hustle, occassionally glancing up from her everpresent almanac.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK TO THE PLAYGROUND - Sidney challenges Raymond.

SIDNEY
Raymond, where's your money?

RAYMOND
I'll get it.

SIDNEY
You'll get it?! You setting me up? Here's my five hundred-- I gotta see your five hundred.

RAYMOND
I said I'd get it, I'll get it. I gotta go to the glove compartment...

SIDNEY
Awright, awright--hurry. I got a hot hand.

THEY WATCH RAYMOND LEAVE THE COURT and head to his car.

BILLY TAKES THE BALL and loosens up with a few casual warm-up shots. Nobody pays much attention.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ALLEY - DAY

RAYMOND GOES TO HIS CAR - He reaches into the car and pulls out two objects we can't identify at first.

CLOSE ON RAYMOND - He pulls a ski mask over his head and reveals the second object--a gun. And...

RAYMOND HURRIES AROUND THE CORNER - To a liquor store. All this is out of sight of the court.

CUT TO:

EXT/INT. THE LIQUOR STORE - DAY

THROUGH THE WINDOW - Raymond walks up to the counter and sticks out the gun. A terrified CLERK opens the cash drawer and hands Raymond a stack of money. Raymond grabs the money and--

RAYMOND RUNS OUT THE FRONT DOOR - And disappears in the alley, tossing his ski mask aside.

THROUGH THE WINDOW - THE CLERK PICKS UP A PHONE and dials, we presume, the police.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE COURTS - DAY

AS RAYMOND HURRIES BACK to the waiting players.

RAYMOND
I only got two-fifty.

SIDNEY
It'll do.

RAYMOND
Get Reggie to hold the money.

REGGIE VOLUNTEERS to hold the money. They hand it to him.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SAME PLAYGROUND - LATER

GAME IN PROGRESS - In quick cuts--

BILLY STRIPS THE BALL FROM RAYMOND and makes a brilliant pass to Sidney who scores.

SIDNEY DRIVES HARD TO THE HOOP and lays in the ball.

RAYMOND GOES UP FOR A SHOT - Sidney rejects the ball resoundingly, shockingly.

BILLY DRILLS A TWENTY FOOTER over the bewildered opposition.

SIDNEY SLAMS ONE HOME for the win. As he does, almost at once, as Raymond's feet hit the ground--

A KNIFE IS OUT - Whipped from Raymond's pocket, flashing in the air, right in Sidney's face.

RAYMOND
You're dead!

SIDNEY
I ain't dead--

The distant sound of sirens.

BILLY
Let's get outta here!

RAYMOND TAKES A SWIPE AT SIDNEY with the knife. Suddenly Sidney's on the defensive.

SIDNEY
Raymond, Raymond, Raymond--we beat you fair, man--you chose this chump for me!

RAYMOND
You set us up!

SIDNEY
I seen you hustle, Raymond--

RAYMOND
But I never used no white motherfucker!

The sirens scream closer and closer. Until:

FOUR POLICE CARS SCREECH AROUND the corner. The Store Owner stands down the street pointing, and:

THE COP CARS JUMP THE CURB AND SCREAM to a stop on the basketball court. But--

EVERYONE SCATTERS in every direction.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CRUMMY OLDS ON THE STREETS - LATER

THE THREE OF THEM LAUGHING at their success. Sidney is the most vocal. Billy's a little concerned, and Gloria, of course, counts the money and marks it all down.

SIDNEY
We took Raymond Dixon to the hole, Billy, nobody ever did that around here since the King and Duck Johnson played here--

BILLY OPENS THE GLOVE COMPARTMENT - Tape cassettes come spilling out onto the seat and floor, which are already covered by cassettes without cases. The car interior is always a mess.

GLORIA
Okay, that's four hundred sixty divided by two--

BILLY SHOVES A TAPE IN THE DECK - Immediately we hear:

Jimi Hendrix begins playing "Purple Haze".

SIDNEY
What's that?

BILLY
Jimi Hendrix.

SIDNEY
I know who it is--why you playing Jimi?

BILLY
I like to listen to him.

SIDNEY
You like to "listen" to Jimi? See? That's the thing--you listen.

BILLY
What'm I s'posed to do, eat it?

SIDNEY
You're supposed to "hear" it.

BILLY
I said I listen.

SIDNEY
There's a big difference between listening and hearing. White people can't hear Jimi--they listen to Jimi.

GLORIA
But his drummer was white.

SIDNEY
Jimi didn't have no fucking white drummer.

GLORIA RETRIEVES A CASSETTE BOX from the pile on the floor. She points to a tiny picture of Hendrix and his group on the cassette, a miniature of the album cover.

CLOSE ON CASSETTE PICTURE - A white drummer.

GLORIA
See?

SIDNEY
That's just a Goddamn picture.
(beat)
No way Jimi had a white rhythm section.

BILLY
(to himself)
Ya listen, ya hear--who cares?

GLORIA
(pointing to the picture)
See? He's blond...

SIDNEY
You can't hear Jimi, no fucking way.

BILLY
Then I'll just listen.

SIDNEY
No. If you don't hear, you don't play. Dig?

BILLY SHRUGS AND POPS THE CASSETTE out of the deck. He grabs another and puts it in. Immediately, we hear:

Dwight Yoakam singing something about Bakersfield.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Now what is that shit?

BILLY
That's Dwight Yoakam.

SIDNEY
That's Dwight fucking "hokum".
Turn it off.

GLORIA
(teasing)
Problem is, you're just
listening. You aren't
hearing. Dwight Yoakam
is serious music.

SIDNEY
Dwight Yoakam is shit.

BILLY
But it's serious shit.

SIDNEY COVERS HIS EARS - It's too painful.

SIDNEY
Lemme out here--
(pointing)
I live at the Trump Towers. Don
and Marla have the place below me...

P.O.V. A VERY TOUGH, UGLY STUCCO APARTMENT BUILDING

THE CAR PULLS TO THE CURB - Billy and Sidney get out.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CAR - DAY

BILLY OPENS THE TRUNK - Sidney retrieves his athletic bag.

SIDNEY
You got a fine woman in there.
Fine...

BILLY
Keep your hands off her.

SIDNEY
What's wrong with you?! I said
she was fine, I didn't say I
was gonna touch her.

BILLY
You touch her I'll kill you.

SIDNEY
(coolly)
Ohhh...it's coming in very clear...
(beat)
You're a cool customer on the court, very cool in the street--can't be rattled in your game. You don't fall for the nigger shit on the court.
(beat)
But with your lady--that's a different matter--I didn't even talk trash and you're scared. I didn't even hit on her and you're thinking about it.

BILLY
Shut up.

SIDNEY
No, no, this is very good shit to know...your weakness, I mean...
(beat)
You're just like every other white man I know.

BILLY
Yeah? Well you're just like every other brother on the playground I've ever seen--

SIDNEY
Talk some shit, I'm ready.

BILLY
You'd rather look good and lose than look bad and win.

SIDNEY
Fuck you.

BILLY
See? I pissed you off already.

SIDNEY
Go get some rest, Brady Bunch.

BILLY
I'm not tired.

SIDNEY
Billy, Billy--tomorrow we're going down to Compton to hustle.
(MORE)

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Tough games in Compton. Big bucks,
(cynically)
We're teammates. Ebony and Ivory.

SIDNEY BACKS OFF and as he leaves he sticks his head in the car window, bidding a gentlemanly farewell to Gloria.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Goodbye, Gloria...it was a pleasure to meet you.

GLORIA
Bye, Sidney...

AND SIDNEY HEADS DOWN THE SIDEWALK toward some apartments.

BILLY SLAMS THE TRUNK SHUT and gets back inside the car.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CAR - BILLY AND GLORIA - DAY

HE POPS THE COUNTRY TAPE from the cassette and slams another one in.

GLORIA
He's nice.

BILLY
He's full of shit.

GLORIA
You're too judgmental.

BILLY TURNS UP THE VOLUME on the cassette player until it belts out a tune, filling the street--of course we hear--

<u>The sounds of Jimi Hendrix at full volume</u>.

AND THE CAR CRUISES SLOWLY PAST SIDNEY on the sidewalk.

CLOSE ON SIDNEY - He just laughs.

GLORIA
Y'know, Billy, maybe he's right. Maybe we've just been listening to Jimi Hendrix all these years.
(beat)
Maybe we can't really <u>hear</u> him.

BILLY RIPS THE TAPE FROM THE PLAYER and throws it into the street. He reaches madly into the pile of tapes rattling around on the seat and he slams in a cassette.

Ray Charles singing "Born to Lose" fills the street.

Instead of solving the problem, it confounds it for Billy.

BILLY
Why's Ray Charles singing cowboy music?!

But Gloria coos warmly. She loves it--the hell with the sociology of the whole thing.

GLORIA
Oh you always ask the wrong questions. Just listen.
(he does)
Everytime I hear this song I want to make love to you, it just makes me want to lock you up in a room and make love to you over and over and...

CLOSE ON BILLY - Chagrin turns to submission, and:

BILLY
I didn't say I didn't like it.

CUT TO:

INT. SEA CAPTAIN MOTEL - LATER - DUSK

BILLY AND GLORIA IN THE THROES OF LOVEMAKING as we continue to hear Ray Charles cowboy music. There's much thrashing around amidst the sheets in the darkened room.

FINALLY THE THRASHING STOPS and with two enoromous sighs, all is quiet.

GLORIA
I love you.

BILLY
I love you too.

THEY FALL ASLEEP IN EACH OTHER'S ARMS and we:

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SAME MOTEL ROOM - NEAR DAWN

CLOSE ON TWO VODKA BOTTLES - One empty, one half full.

ASLEEP - GLORIA AWAKENS SLIGHTLY in a groggy stupor.

GLORIA
Honey...my mouth is dry...I'm thirsty...

Billy mumbles some sort of recognition, and--

BILLY GETS OUT OF BED and goes, stark naked, to the bathroom where he fills a glass of water and brings it back to her.

HE CLIMBS BACK INTO BED, still sleepy, and holds it out.

BILLY
Here ya go.

She refuses it. Her tone is even and matter-of-fact.

GLORIA
When I say I'm thirsty it doesn't mean I want you to bring me a glass of water.

BILLY
It doesn't?

GLORIA
You're missing the point of me saying "I'm thirsty". If I have a problem, you're not supposed to solve it. Men make the mistake of thinking they can solve a woman's problems, it makes them feel omnipotent.

BILLY
Did you have a bad dream?

GLORIA
(ignoring his question)
It's a way of controlling a woman.

BILLY
Bringing you a glass of water?

GLORIA
Yes. It's the first step.
(beat)
If I'm thirsty, I don't want you to bring me a glass of water. I want you to sympathize, I want you to say "Gloria, I know what it feels like to be thirsty. I, too, have had a dry mouth and I know it feels like crap.
(MORE)

GLORIA (cont'd)
I want you to connect with me through sharing an understanding of the concept of 'dry-mouthedness'."

He stares long and hard at her.

BILLY
Are you serious?

GLORIA
You're into control.

BILLY
Shut up.

GLORIA
See?

BILLY
All I know is this--
(beat)
When I say I'm thirsty it means "if anyone in the room has a glass of water I wouldn't mind a drink". When I say I wanta make love It means "let's screw"!

GLORIA
That's exactly the sort of thing I thought you'd say.
(beat)
Besides, I don't like the word "screw". I prefer "make love" or "fuck". Screwing's for carpenters--

BILLY FLINGS THE GLASS OF WATER in Gloria's face and gets out of bed.

HE PULLS ON HIS PANTS quickly, finding his shoes and shirt.

GLORIA (cont'd)
Where are you going?

BILLY
Anywhere.

GLORIA
Billy! Come back! I wanta make love! I wanta screw!

BILLY SLAMS THE DOOR SHUT and heads outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SEA CAPTAINS MOTEL - DAWN

BILLY STANDS OUTSIDE THE ROOM in the gravel lot. It's a chilly, Southern California morning. Damp. Foggy.

BILLY
"Listen"..."hear"..."screw"...
"fuck"...shit!

HE TURNS AROUND AND HEADS BACK inside the room.

CUT TO:

INT. THE ROOM - DAWN

GLORIA SITS THERE IN BED - She hasn't moved. Billy walks straight to the bed and stands, facing her.

BILLY
Gloria?

GLORIA
Yes.

BILLY
Will you marry me?

Silence.

GLORIA
Jesus.

BILLY
I'm in love with you.

GLORIA
I thought you just left me.

BILLY
I did, but I turned around
in the gravel. I've been thinking
about it for a long time.
(formally, nervously)
Gloria, will you marry me.

Another silence.

GLORIA
No, Billy, I won't.

BILLY
Then goodbye.

BILLY GATHERS HIS THINGS AND THROWS THEM into his travel bag--it takes about 5 seconds to pack everything he owns.

GLORIA
You're gonna leave me alone here?

BILLY
You've got the money, I've got the car.

AND HE EXITS one more time.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SEA CAPTAINS MOTEL - JUST AFTER DAWN

BILLY STARTS TO GET INTO HIS CAR - And casually looks around the lot. Something isn't right.

P.O.V. A VAN at the curb.

P.O.V. TWO MEN IN OVERCOATS at the Motel Office.

HE HESITATES - Then starts to move, as--

THE MEN IN OVERCOATS MOVE TOWARD HIM - With purpose.

BILLY RUNS BACK TO THE MOTEL ROOM and bursts in the door.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MOTEL ROOM - DAWN

GLORIA STILL SITS IN THE BED - As if she's waiting for another proposal.

BILLY
The Boocher Boys!

GLORIA LEAPS OUT OF BED in a flash. Also, naked, she madly throws on whatever she can as--

GLORIA
I can't believe they found us,
I can't believe--

BILLY OPENS THE BATHROOM WINDOW and looks out. They caught the men off guard--there's nobody behind the building yet.

GLORIA
I got the jar, I got the jar!

BILLY
This way, this way!

Loud knocking at the door.

BILLY STARTS OUT THE WINDOW HIMSELF - Then looks back.

P.O.V. HIS BASKETBALL sitting on the floor.

BILLY
My ball!

GLORIA
Don't go back!

BILLY
That ball's got a great feel!
I can shoot with that ball!

GLORIA'S OUTSIDE BECKONING through the window.

GLORIA
If you get the ball, get the Stoli!

BILLY
I ain't getting your booze!

GLORIA
What about the car?

BILLY
Later!

BILLY HURRIES BACK INSIDE - He grabs the ball, as--

GLORIA CLIMBS BACK IN - And retrieves her vodka.

THEY BOTH JUST ESCAPE through the window as--

THE BOOCHER BOYS KNOCK DOWN THE DOOR - They're a beat late.

BOOCHER BOY#1
Cover the back!

CUT TO:

EXT A VACANT LOT - DAWN

BILLY AND GLORIA RACE FOR THEIR LIVES across a weed infested lot, toward an alley.

THE BOOCHER BOYS ARE AFTER THEM but quickly fall behind Billy and Gloria on foot.

BILLY AND GLORIA ATHLETICALLY SCALE A FENCE - They cling to their clothes, the jar of money, his athletic bag, the vodka, and of course, the basketball.

THEY LAUGH AS THEY RUN - Through the field, down an alley--there's a familiarity to their escape, as if it's not the first bathroom window they've ever fled from.

DOWN PICO BOULEVARD - Running and laughing, until:

CUT TO:

EXT. THE OCEAN BREEZE MOTEL - DAY

BILLY COMES OUT OF THE OFFICE - Gloria waits with their meager belongings. And--

THEY HEAD INSIDE A NEW ROOM - Still high.

CUT TO:

INT. OCEAN BREEZE MOTEL - DAY

A step down from the Sea Captain, if that's possible.

BILLY AND GLORIA TEAR EACH OTHER'S CLOTHES OFF and fall onto the bed, making love, screwing, whatever, all over again.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE VISTA VIEW APARTMENTS - EARLY MORNING

A thoroughly ugly stucco building in the Crenshaw district, a predominantly black neighborhood. The redundant name of the apartment is made more ridiculous by its utter lack of a view of anything, save the congestion of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and a half-boarded up shopping center.

CLOSE ON A BABY in a crib staring up at a slowly spinning mobile featuring jumping sheep circling endlessly, tinkling a music box version of "It's a Small World Afterall".

SIDNEY
(singing along)
It's a small world, after-all,
It's a small world, after-all,
It's a small world, after-all,
It's a small world after all.
(to himself)
Great fucking lyrics...
(to the baby)
Hey, punkin--good morning...

SIDNEY REACHES DOWN AND PICKS UP THE BABY and carries it into the small kitchen, where--

RHONDA, his wife, fixes breakfast. She's dressed up, as if she's going out.

SIDNEY
I'm gonna disconnect the music box on that sheep thing.

RHONDA
Oh, he likes it...

SIDNEY
Why you dressed up?

RHONDA
I'm looking for a job.

SIDNEY
No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no...I got a job.

RHONDA
We need a real job. I've got an interview this morning for a receptionist.

SIDNEY
Hey, wait--I made another two hundred yesterday. Cash. No taxes, no bullshit.

RHONDA
Playing basketball isn't a job.

SIDNEY
I don't want you to work. Who'll stay home with him?

RHONDA
I talked to my mother. She'll take him during the day.

SIDNEY PUTS THE BABY IN A HIGHCHAIR and gets very upset, rising.

SIDNEY
I don't want you to work!
I wanta take care of you!

RHONDA
You do take care of me--it's just numbers, that's all. Until we get a little more stable I should be bringing home a check, too. I'm trying to help!

SIDNEY
I got a lotta jobs. I got the phone thing. I got the cable thing. And you can't say the money I'm making on the basketball court ain't real?! Does it buy food? Does it pay rent?

RHONDA
Here's your breakfast.

SIDNEY
I don't want breakfast!

RHONDA
Sidney!

HE TAKES HER FIRMLY in his hands, looking her in the eyes.

SIDNEY
I'm saving up--we're gonna move.

RHONDA
You've said it before.

SIDNEY
I'm on the verge of having enough money. We are moving.

RHONDA
But we gotta stay in the neighborhood.

SIDNEY
Of course we're staying in the neighborhood! We're just getting away from this God damn building.

RHONDA
I would like that.

SIDNEY
Good. It's a promise.

RHONDA
But I'm still looking for a job.

SIDNEY
Shit...

HE TURNS AND LEAVES the house in a huff.

RHONDA
Shit...

CUT TO:

EXT. MARTIN LUTHER KING BLVD. - DAY

SIDNEY IN THE "FAMILY CAR" - An older Trans-Am that's seen better days.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CAR - DAY

SIDNEY NERVOUSLY SLAPS THE STEERING WHEEL to the music blaring from his deck. He's a little more nervous, edgier, than we've seen him.

THE CAR PULLS INTO a fast food joint swarming with Mexican workers, all looking for work.

CUT TO:

EXT. LUCY'S FAST FOOD MEXICAN AT PICO AND LA BREA - DAY

DOZENS OF MEXICAN ILLEGALS SWARM ALL OVER the car, looking for work. They crawl over almost every car entering the parking lot--the impact is shocking, even frightening. Sidney leaps out of the car and takes over the situation--he's used to it.

MEXICAN WORKERS
(in Spanish)
Do you have work? I'm a good worker--five dollars an hour--I do anything, etc....

SIDNEY
Amigos, amigos! Chill a little, eh?! No hay trabajo hoy, dig? No work today--check those green cards, amigos! Tarjetas verdes, eh?

SIDNEY PUSHES HIS WAY through the desperate-for-work laborers, to--

THE FRONT OF LUCY'S FAST FOOD - A mixture of people mill around, in line, ordering food. Some are poor but not all. TWO MEN IN SUITS on their way to work have stopped in--obviously professionals grabbing a quick cup of coffee.

SIDNEY APPROACHES THEM SMOOTHLY - Presenting a business card.

SIDNEY
Gentlemen--may I give you my card?

MAN #1
What do you do?

SIDNEY
I install phone systems--commercial or residential--without the middle man.

MAN #2
What middle man?

SIDNEY
The phone company.
(beat)
I can give you cable television without the cable company, I can put you in touch with contractors, electricians, plumbers--none of whom will go through city building department--I can get you anything built without a building permit, in other words...I can eliminate the middle man or I can be the middle man.
(proudly)
It's a service.

MAN #1
Sorry, not interested...

SIDNEY
No problem.

HE MOVES QUICKLY TO THE WINDOW to place his order. A quick glance at the painted menu--

P.O.V. A TWENTY FOOT LONG MENU with 186 combos listed. He's very familiar with it, with the whole operation.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Come esta, Yolanda--yeah...I'll take the breakfast burrito...number ninety-seven. And a coffee.

Suddenly Sidney sees something, someone--

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Uh, oh...

P.O.V. - A BLACK MAN SPOTS SIDNEY - Someone who, it's immediately clear, wants to see Sidney more than Sidney wants to see him. This is LEON, 45, a well dressed bruiser.

LEON
Sid, my man...

SIDNEY TURNS AND RUNS - Right into the arms of TWO THUGS who are clearly with Leon. He even knows them slightly.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Peaches and Herb! Love your shit...

THEY PIN HIM TO THE COUNTER - And Leon is there in a second, right in Sidney's face.

A MEXICAN COUNTER WORKER GRABS A TELEPHONE - And dials.

MEXICAN WORKER
(broken English)
We have a fight among four negroes...

BACK TO LEON AND SIDNEY - Leon is steamed.

LEON
You owe me two hundred dollars an' you been ducking me!

LEON NODS - "Peaches" or "Herb" twists his arm. Sidney winces.

SIDNEY
Arrgghhh...

LEON
Cut him.

SIDNEY
Wait, wait, wait, Leon, Leon--
(beat)
--you got cable T.V.?

LEON
What the fuck's it to you.

SIDNEY
What channels you get?

A KNIFE IS STUCK at Sidney's throat.

LEON
How the fuck do I know what I get?

SIDNEY
Well if you happen to be one of five million households in the greater Los Angeles area who is not receiving the Lakers--I can bring the Great Western Fabulous Forum right into your home--
Magic, James, Byron, Sam, Vlade--

LEON
I don't want no fuckin' Czechoslovakian Communist playing center for the Lakers, you hear me? I want 'em to trade for Akeem the Dream--

SIDNEY
We all want The Dream, Leon, the question is "Do you want the Lakers?"

CUT TO:

EXT. A NICE HOME IN SOUTH CENTRAL L.A. - DAY

SIDNEY'S UP A TELEPHONE POLE - The three of them watch from the lawn, eyeing Sidney who's tying into existent lines. He seems to know exactly what he's doing.

LEON
If this don't work we cut him.

SIDNEY IS DOWN THE POLE IN A SECOND - And leads the gathered inside.

CUT TO:

INT. LEON'S HOUSE - DAY

ALL FOUR OF THEM in a nice home on a palm lined street in a black neighborhood, The furniture is all wrapped tightly in clear plastic.

LEON FLIPS THE REMOTE SWITCH - Sportschannel, Primeticket, Select, SpectraVision--one after the other.

SIDNEY
For my amigo.

LEON
Don't amigo me.

SIDNEY
Look, Leon, I got a bonus to show you I pay my bills--a little surprise--

SIDNEY FLIPS A SWITCH on the remote, and voila--

CLOSE ON THE T.V. SCREEN - A NUDE WOMAN writhing and posing in a field, with harp music.

LEON
Damn. What's that?

SIDNEY
I unscrambled the Playboy channel for you--'cause we're amigos, eh?
(beat)
Call it interest on my debt.

Leon stands in amazement. Sidney could have conjured up a thousand clowns and it wouldn't have impressed Leon more.

LEON
Look't that. This man takes a picture full of shit and turns it into a naked redhead...you're a God damn genius, Sidney.

SIDNEY
You're right, Leon, I am a genius.
(quickly operating)
Let me ask you something--you still in real estate?

LEON
Got houses and apartments all over the city...
(staring at the T.V.)
The guy's a genius...

SIDNEY
Got anything around here?

LEON
Yeah, I got a tasty little house for rent across the street. Way over your head, though.

SIDNEY LOOKS OUT THE WINDOW across the street.

P.O.V. A LITTLE BUNGALOW - A small yard. Perfect.

SIDNEY
Don't rent it for a week. I want it.

LEON
Or else?

SIDNEY
I'll scramble your Playboy and give you the Disney channel--you'll go from naked women to a buncha fuckin' mice.

LEON LOOKS DOWN AT THE T.V. - Close on the redhead.

CUT TO:

EXT. A PLAYGROUND IN COMPTON - DAY

A first class playground game in progress.

SEVERAL NEW FACES ARE THERE - A collection of low-level gamblers and hustlers watching the games, making small bets, working a thousand scams unrelated to the game.

BILLY SITS ON THE SIDELINES - The only white. He hasn't worn the black socks this time--it would be too obvious--but he does look out of place.

ON THE COURT - ROBERT, 25, GOES AGAINST SIDNEY in a two on two game. He is a player of considerable skills.

ROBERT DRIVES HARD TO THE BASKET - A power move, full of strength and grace. The court opens for him. He goes high to the hoop, and--

SIDNEY EXPLODES SKYWARD - Slamming the ball away resoundingly, a dramatic rejection of the shot.

ROBERT
Foul. Gimme the ball.

SIDNEY
Foul?! All ball! I got all ball!

ROBERT
You got my hand.

SIDNEY
Hand's part of the ball!

ROBERT
You got my wrist.

SIDNEY
Wrist is part of the hand!

ROBERT
Yeah, and the kneebone's connected to the dick-bone. Gimme the ball.

ZEKE, 25, one of Robert's teammates, comes to the defense.

ZEKE
He fouled the shit outta Robert.

SIDNEY
Whatta you know? You couldn't carry my jock in a suitcase. I heard there was some players in Compton--this ain't shit!

ROBERT
(to Sidney)
I get very tired of looking at your mouth. Your mother musta throwed you outta the house at an early fuckin' age.

Sidney goes overboard.

SIDNEY
My mother?! My mother?! You don't talk about my mother! You don't ever talk about my mother! You wanta put money on me kicking your ass?! Huh?! My mother! Me an' any guy here can take you.

ROBERT
You and who?!

SIDNEY
Pick me a partner--I can beat you guys alone! You don't ever talk about my mother! I'll kill you!

ROBERT
How much you wanta roll?

SIDNEY PULLS A THICK WAD of cash from his pocket.

SIDNEY
I got...eh...
(counting quickly)
...two, three, four...eh...just a second...12, 13...eh...
(waving the cash)
...seventeen hundred dollars.

A chorus of "Whoa's" goes up on the court and the sideline.

ROBERT
Seventeen hundred dollars?!

SIDNEY
Step up to the bar, Jack...

ROBERT
We pick your partner?

SIDNEY
Anybody! Any fuckin' stiff out here! Seventeen hundred dollars and don't talk about my mother!

ROBERT
I want that guy.

THEY POINT TO BILLY - He plays the part as usual.

BILLY
Me?

SIDNEY
I'm fucked. I'd rather have that fat guy over there.

ANGLE TO A FAT GUY watching the game.

FAT GUY
Who you callin' a fat guy?

ROBERT
Seventeen hundred dollars?

ZEKE
Look't that turkey, Robert--
(pointing to Billy)
I got eight hundred on me--just cashed my check.

ROBERT
I got fifty bucks.

SIDNEY
You're short. Seventeen or take a walk.

ROBERT
I got a diamond 'round my neck.

ROBERT DISPLAYS A JEWEL SETTING on a necklace. Quickly, everyone gathers around to examine it.

SIDNEY
Ain't no diamond. That's a zircon.

ROBERT
Zircon this, m'fucker...

SIDNEY
Okay, okay--we'll say this rock here's worth three bills--call it seventeen hundred altogether...

FAT GUY
I'll hold the money--I ain't goin' nowhere.

SIDNEY
He's safe, give him the dough.

THE FAT GUY HOLDS THIRTY-FOUR HUNDRED DOLLARS in his hand. He stares at it--the most money he's ever touched.

FAT GUY
I'm the bank. Get your hands off this shit, I'm the bank, I'm the bank...

SIDNEY
We play to ten by ones--make it, take it.

AND SIDNEY TURNS TO BILLY who's dribbling the ball.

SIDNEY
Can you play?

BILLY
A little.

SIDNEY
A little's enough.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE GAME - DAY

BILLY DRILLS A TWENTY FOOTER - Eyes turn as they always do when he reveals his ability.

ROBERT DRIVES HARD TO THE BASKET - Scoring over Sidney.

ZEKE SCORES ON A SPINNING MOVE

SIDNEY PASSES UP A SHOT - Drops a pass off to Billy who drills a 15 footer.

SIDNEY
Count. What's the count?

ROBERT
Fours.

BILLY COMES OVER TO SIDNEY - Talks in private.

BILLY
Take the ball to the hole, man--you're quicker than him.

SIDNEY
I will, I will...

ROBERT DRILLS A SHOT - Sidney's defense is a bit late.

ALL FOUR PLAYERS FIGHT OVER A REBOUND

SIDNEY IS WIDE OPEN for a ten footer. He passes up the shot, dumping the ball to Billy, but--

ROBERT STEALS THE PASS and scores easily.

SIDNEY
What's the count? Eight--eight?

ZEKE
Eight, eight.

BILLY
Sidney, you get the open shot, take it! Don't dump it, put it up!

SIDNEY
Yeah, yeah...

ROBERT MUSCLES IN AN INSIDE SHOT

ZEKE
Nine--eight, us. Point game.

BILLY
Gotta play D, Sid, we gotta get it...

ROBERT HAS THE BALL AT THE TOP OF THE KEY - He goes nose to nose with Sidney, who eyeballs him.

ROBERT
One more bucket an' me an' Zeke are splitting seventeen hunnert, Sidney-- one more bucket...

SIDNEY
That's a bucket you'll never get.

ROBERT
You tried to hustle us--this honkie's a ringer--but you still weren't good enough.

SIDNEY
Take it to the hole, Robert, take it to the hole--you're so God damned good you'll just take it to the hole!

AND ROBERT DOES - Driving hard to the basket, as--

ROBERT GETS A STEP ON SIDNEY - He goes up high, Sidney meets the challenge, but, somehow doesn't reach out and slam the shot away, and--

ROBERT SCORES THE GAME WINNER over Sidney's defense, and immediately there's much hollering and handslapping.

CLOSE ON SIDNEY - Cursing at himself.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
God damn it...

CLOSE ON BILLY - In a state of shock.

BILLY
I'm a dead man, I am a dead man...

SIDNEY
Sorry, man...I thought I had it...

ROBERT
You had shit...

ROBERT TAKES THE MONEY FROM THE FAT GUY and turns to the court.

FAT GUY
It was nice to just hold it
a minute...

BILLY JUST STARES, watching his hard earned money disappear. He approaches Sidney.

BILLY
I'm dog meat. I'm a dead man...
She's throwing me out for sure, now...

SIDNEY
I had a lousy game, Billy, I
feel terrible...

BILLY
Shit! We're better than those
guys! I've beat guys ten times
better than them!

SIDNEY
It's my fault...

BILLY
It's nobody's fault...sometimes
the ball doesn't go down, that's all...

SIDNEY
You wanta ride?

Billy is very depressed, churning about the loss and what lies ahead.

BILLY
Naw...I'll take the rail and the bus...

SIDNEY
You sure?

BILLY
Yeah...I gotta plan how I'm gonna tell Gloria that I lost everything we had and then think about where I'm gonna be sleeping tonight.

SIDNEY
Yeah...Jesus...I'm sorry...

SIDNEY PUTS AN ARM AROUND BILLY and pats him on the shoulder reassuringly, and--

BILLY PICKS UP HIS BAG and heads off the playground.

CUT TO:

EXT/INT. THE BLUE LINE LIGHT RAIL TRAIN - DUSK

BILLY SITS ON THE TRAIN - Riding it back from Compton. All the other passengers are Black, Asian, Hispanic.

CLOSE ON BILLY - He stares out the window. Humiliated, and worse--broke.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MOTEL - DUSK

AN RTD BUS PULLS UP - Billy gets off and drags his bag toward the motel room.

CLOSE ON BILLY - He hesitates, takes a deep breath, and enters.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MOTEL - DUSK

THE ROOM IS COVERED WITH CHARTS, MAPS, LISTS - Names and dates written with large felt pen, endlessly revised. Books, almanacs, reference materials are everywhere.

BILLY ENTERS - He stands there a moment. She turns.

GLORIA
Thirty-nine is the answer. What is the question?
(beat)
How many books in the Old Testament?
(beat)
Right.

SHE THROWS DOWN A DRINK - She's on a roll.

BILLY
Did Jeopardy call?

GLORIA
Not yet. Y'know I'm gonna need a nice dress 'cause when they do call you have to be ready to go.
(beat)
You wanta hear the Books of the Old Testament backwards? Malachai, Zechariah, Haggai, Zephaniah--

BILLY
Gloria, please--

GLORIA
I also learned Famous Women, and foods that start with Q...

BILLY
Will you please shut up?

GLORIA
What's wrong?

BILLY
I lost the money.

This, at last, stops her cold.

GLORIA
You lost the money? How much of it?

BILLY
All of it.

GLORIA
You lost all our money again?!

HE NODS - She pours a drink.

GLORIA (cont'd)
You gonna stop me from drinking now?

HE GRABS THE BOTTLE - Takes a hit.

BILLY
Look, you shouldn't pay the Boocher Boys anyway! They're crooks!

GLORIA
And they hurt people.
(disbelief)
Seventeen hundred dollars! We were almost to three thousand!

BILLY
This is the last straw, right? I mean I'm history, aren't I?

GLORIA
Were your opponents that good?

BILLY
I've beat a lot tougher guys in Brooklyn and Jersey...

GLORIA
You weren't hitting your jump shot?

BILLY
I was hitting mine.

GLORIA
What about Sidney?

BILLY
He had an off day. He didn't even shoot much. His man scored on him and usually he plays tough D.

Silence. She thinks about it all.

GLORIA
You got hustled.

BILLY
I didn't get hustled.

GLORIA
You got hustled by Sidney.

BILLY
You're fulla shit!

GLORIA
He set you up. It's obvious. He wasn't missing--he just wasn't shooting. And he wasn't playing defense.
(beat)
He hustled you.

BILLY
I don't believe it. He's a good guy.

GLORIA
You told me he was "full of shit".

BILLY
He's full of shit and he's a good guy.

GLORIA
You're the one full of shit.
(beat)
He hustled you and we're going to his house to ask him for the money back!

BILLY
A man cannot ask for the money back!

GLORIA GRABS HER COAT - Her mind's made up.

GLORIA
We know where he lives--we're going.

BILLY
(lamely defending himself)
We can't. My car's outta gas.

GLORIA
We'll take the bus!

BILLY
I don't have the correct change!

He doesn't even believe his own arguments.

CUT TO:

INT. A CITY BUS - NIGHT

GLORIA READS A MAP - Billy protests.

GLORIA
Let's see, we let Sidney off near the corner of Crenshaw and, uh...

BILLY
You don't understand how these things work. Men understand how--

GLORIA
(ignoring him)
--there was a big apartment house near the corner...

BILLY
Lemme explain. A basketball court is a simple thing--some lines and a hoop. It's all ya need--lines and a hoop...

GLORIA
What about a ball?

BILLY
Yeah. And a ball...
(beat)
Men's rules are very simple. If you win, you win. If you lose, you lose.
(beat)
But whatever you do, you don't "ask" for the money back.

GLORIA
Why not?

BILLY
It's not part of the rules.

Gloria looks up from the map and stares him in the eye.

GLORIA
Well I got different rules, you wanna hear 'em--here they are.
(beat)
Sometimes when you win, you really lose. Sometimes when you lose, you really win. Sometimes when you tie, you actually win or lose, and sometimes when you win or lose, you actually tie.

A beat.

BILLY
I hate it when you talk like that. It makes me crazy when you talk like that--

GLORIA
(interrupting)
Winning and losing is all one big orgnanic globule from which one extracts what one needs.

BILLY
I'm fucked.

AS THE BUS STOPS - Gloria leads them off.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE VISTA VIEW APARTMENTS - NIGHT

GLORIA CHECKS THE NAMES ABOVE the mail slots. Several renters come and go--all black.

CLOSE ON NAMES ON MAIL BOX - The name GREEN--Apt. E.

BILLY
This is the single worst idea I've ever heard of. What're you talking about--"globules"?
(beat)
He did not hustle me! This is the most humiliating--

GLORIA
Look, Billy, you're thinking too much. It's all very simple.

BILLY
What?

Gloria is tough as nails and full of resolve--

GLORIA
They got our fucking money--I want it back.

GLORIA RINGS THE DOORBELL - Billy is miserable, like a school child with a bad grade being accompanied by his mother to see the teacher.

THE DOOR OPENS - Rhonda stands there, the baby in her arms.

RHONDA
Yes?

GLORIA
Does Sidney Green live here?

RHONDA
He does. He's my husband.

GLORIA
Your husband stole seventeen hundred dollars from my boyfriend.

RHONDA PUSHES THE DOOR OPEN and calls out--

RHONDA
Sidney? There's some people here say you stole their money.

ANGLE TO THE LIVING ROOM - SIDNEY SITS in front of a T.V. watching the LAKER GAME.

ROBERT AND ZEKE, each in the uniform of a Security Guard, also sit in the room. A pile of money is on the coffee table.

THE MEN ALL LOOK AT EACH OTHER - They hustled Billy.

SIDNEY
Shit.
(calling out)
I didn't "steal" his money. I hustled his money.

GLORIA
See, honey, I told you.

BILLY
Shit...

BILLY AND GLORIA ARE SHOWN into the room by Rhonda.

SIDNEY RISES to greet his unexpected "guests".

SIDNEY
What the hell you doing here?!
I have not invited you into my home!

RHONDA
I did. I wanta talk to--

GLORIA
Gloria.

RHONDA
Gloria.

SIDNEY
This man hustled me on the beach before I ever hustled him. We're even.

RHONDA
Good. Then you won't mind if Gloria and I have a little talk.
(to Gloria)
You want some coffee?

GLORIA
Please.

RHONDA LEADS GLORIA into the small kitchen, leaving--

BILLY AND SIDNEY STANDING THERE - Awkwardly, to say the least, the two men stare at each other. Billy looks down at Robert, Zeke and company.

BILLY
You smoked me.

ROBERT
Yes we did. Clean, wasn't it.

SIDNEY
This your idea to come here?

BILLY
Hell, no--what kinda guy you think I am? It was hers.

ZEKE
You're old lady is a ballbreaker bringing you down here.

ROBERT
(to Zeke)
Your ex used to have a hook in your nose too, Zeke--you're in no position to criticize anybody else's ballbreaker.

SIDNEY
(tough, to Billy)
You ain't getting the money back.

BILLY
(looks at the T.V.)
You like the Lakers or the Blazers?

THE MEN
Lakers...Lakers...etc....

BILLY
I'll take the Blazers and five points. Bet ya twenty bucks.

SIDNEY
You don't have twenty bucks.

BILLY
Oh yeah...

CLOSE ON T.V. - CLOSE UPS OF THE HOLLYWOOD CELEBRITIES that sit courtside at the Laker games.

VOICE OF CHICK HEARN
...Jack's at tonight's game... there's Dyan Cannon--hello Dyan... and Eddie Murphy, a real fan...

ZEKE
I know Eddie...he comes to the studio sometimes--friendly to the guards...

ROBERT
You don't know Eddie.

ZEKE
I know Eddie! He never mentioned you!

SIDNEY
Would you guys shut the fuck up?

They do, and he turns back to Billy.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
I can't believe you came here.

CUT TO:

INT. THE KITCHEN - SAME TIME

RHONDA AND GLORIA and a pot of coffee at the kitchen table.

GLORIA
Okay, no bullshit here--so I want the money back.

RHONDA
You want the money back? You can't possibly need it worse than me.

GLORIA
Yes I could.

RHONDA
We're saving up to move.

GLORIA
Look--Billy and Sidney were a team! Teammates can't hustle each other.

RHONDA
Why not?

GLORIA
It's not artistic.

RHONDA GOES TO THE CUPBOARD and pulls out a cookie jar. She sets it on the table and empties it--money pours out.

RHONDA
I don't care about art--all I care about is getting out of the God damn Vista View Apartments because there ain't no vistas and there ain't no views and there sure as hell ain't no vistas of no views.

Gloria stares at the money. She won't budge.

GLORIA
Seventeen hundred and forty of those dollars are mine. I owe the Boocher Boys and they kill people.

RHONDA
Who the hell are the Boocher Boys?

GLORIA RISES TO LOOK THROUGH the cupboards.

GLORIA
I need a drink.

RHONDA
There...

RHONDA POINTS TO A BOTTLE - Gloria pours some wine in her coffee mug after rinsing it out.

GLORIA
I met Billy at Tulane. He was a sophomore, a big star--I didn't know the alumni was slipping him money 'cause he never had any.
(MORE)

GLORIA
Anyway, I had some debts. So I borrowed three thousand dollars from a couple of low-life brothers known as the Boocher Boys--I don't even know their first names--they used to hang around the players in New Orleans, buy drinks, schmooze...

SHE POURS ANOTHER drink.

GLORIA (cont'd)
I saved my money and paid back the loan but the Boocher Boys said that interest on the loan was another three thousand. Billy went crazy--so they said they'd cancel the three thousand in interest if he shaved points on a game. He didn't have to throw the game, just make sure that Tulane won by ten or less--

RHONDA
Did he shave the points?

Gloria smiles and sighs.

GLORIA
With five minutes to go in the game Tulane was ahead by five and the guy Billy was guarding started talking trash--Billy got pissed, and scored the last fifteen points of the game single handed.

RHONDA
Uh, oh...

GLORIA
Tulane won by twenty, the Boocher Boys lost their shirts, Billy flunked out--

RHONDA
And you've been on the run ever since.

GLORIA
Yeah. I thought we escaped 'em when we came to L.A. but they're back.

CUT TO:

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

THE GUYS WATCHING THE LAKERS - Still arguing.

ROBERT
Swear to God, I know Eddie. Used to hang with Eddie.

ZEKE
You know shit.
(beat)
Hey, Sidney--are you moving from the neighborhood. That's bullshit, y'know, leaving the hood.

ROBERT
We gotta stay together.

SIDNEY
I don't know where I'm moving but don't give me that "staying in the neighborhood shit". Only reason you haven't moved is 'cause you can't afford it either.

ZEKE
If I make a million dollars--I'm still staying here.

SIDNEY
You're full of shit.

BILLY
C'mon, loan me twenty and we got a bet. I'll give you eight points.

SIDNEY
(ignoring Billy)
I'm getting outta this dump. I ain't leaving the neighborhood.

THE WOMEN APPEAR IN THE DOORWAY and enter the room.

RHONDA
We have a solution.

SIDNEY
What?

GLORIA
Me and Rhonda are keeping the money and dividing it up.

RHONDA
You guys need to kiss and make up and figure out a way to go make some more money--

GLORIA
Maybe you could play in that tournament or something.

BILLY
No way I'm playing with this guy.

RHONDA
Sidney?

SIDNEY
No way. No fucking way.

Silence. Everyone looks at each other, and--

And we hear Sam and Dave singing xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx.

CUT TO:

EXT. VENICE BEACH COURTS - DAY

OUR SAM AND DAVE SING "xxxxxxxxxxxxx" in the background.

BANNERS AND FLAGS - THE 2 ON 2 TOURNAMENT sponsored by Miller Beer or Coke or Nike or somebody like that. For once the court looks more formal--a few bleachers have been installed. A racially mixed crowd--the players as well as the sea of onlookers.

A LARGE SIGN READS - $5000 FIRST PLACE PRIZE MONEY on top of a billboard sized tournament chart, listing each 2 on 2 team with a chart to follow the tournament.

A P.A. ANNOUNCER SITS AT A TABLE surrounded by sponsors' signs and a handful of SPONSOR REPRESENTATIVES, well meaning executive-types anxious to be photographed in a racially mixed environment amidst much hoopla.

P.A. ANNOUNCER
Welcome to the first annual "Two on Two for Brotherhood Basketball Tournament"--also known as the T.T.B.B.T.--sponsored by a coalition of American Corporations as a way of giving just a little bit back to the community in the spirit of promoting Brotherhood Among Us All.

Very polite applause. And as Mr. White Bread rambles on and on in some self-congratulatory drivel...we find--

ANGLE TO SAM AND DAVE who've finished singing.

SAM
Five thousand dollars for first place and I forgot my sneakers.

DAVE
They don't let winos in this tournament, Sam.

SAM
Wino this, melon head.
(beat)
I ever tell you I used to take Michael Jordan to the hole--
got in his face with reg-u-larity?

DAVE
I ever tell you that Dr. J was my family doctor?

SAM
And I've heard he's a fine physician...

BILLY AND SIDNEY WATCH a first round tournament game, not far away, where the players yet to go on the court size up the players on the court.

P.O.V. DWIGHT "THE FLIGHT" MCGHEE AND WILLIE LEWIS dominate a game with cocky assurance and great seriousness--

SIDNEY
That's "Flight" and Willie Lewis--
they can play--they'll be in the finals...
(beat)
Against us...
(beat)
We can beat these guys...
(silence from Billy)
Gotta play 'em tough...
(more silence)
Do you talk?

Billy shakes his head "No".

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Oh, good. That'll be pleasant for me and I'm sure your girlfriend will find it a welcome relief.

BILLY
Fuck you.

SIDNEY
Good to hear you're still there.

No answer.

THE GAME BEGINS - They watch it in silence. Billy is completely unresponsive to Sidney.

P.O.V. "THE FLIGHT" AND WILLIE DOMINATE the game, scoring at will against good opponents.

SIDNEY
"Flight" is allergic to defense and Willie will force a lotta bad shots if you stay in his face...

SIDNEY STUDIES THE GAME INTENSELY - Watching each move closely, checking each player's tendencies--does he go left with authority, does he play good defense, does he get rattled when things go badly...

P.O.V. "FLIGHT" AND WILLIE GET HOT HANDS and put on a devasting display of outside shooting and spectacular moves to the basket. These guys are not only good, but they've clearly played together a long time. They play as one.

SIDNEY
(to himself)
Got our hands full here...

BILLY SUDDENLY BREAKS OUT OF HIS SILENCE - In a shocking manner, causing heads to turn. Especially Sidney's.

BILLY
Hey you, Chump, yeah you, Potato Head--I'm talkin' to you!

THE GAME STOPS - "THE FLIGHT" AND WILLIE look over at Billy and Sidney with disbelief.

FLIGHT
What?

BILLY
You heard me, Chump! Is that the best game you got 'cause if it is you might as well take the free t-shirt and go home.

FLIGHT
Who is this guy? Is this guy for real? I don't believe this...

SIDNEY
(confidentially to Billy)
What the fuck're you doing you idiot?

BILLY
I'm doing two things.

SIDNEY
Two things?! What?! What?!

BILLY
I'm getting 'em pissed off--most guys play lousy when they're mad.

SIDNEY
You're embarrassing me.

BILLY
Yeah--
(smiles)
That's the other thing I'm doing.

Sidney is caught off guard by this, but before he responds--

"THE FLIGHT" AND WILLIE get into Billy's face, stopping the game briefly--

FLIGHT
You're candy, ya turkey--

REFEREE
That's enough, Dwight, Willie--you got a game to play...

WILLIE
You believe this idiot?

AS THE FLIGHT AND WILLIE FINISH THEIR GAME - Sidney gets all over Billy.

SIDNEY
You stupid shit, why you acting like an asshole.

BILLY
I'm acting like you.

SIDNEY
I can act like that--you don't know how. You have a hard enough time being white.
(tough)
You will not embarrass me--but you are pissing me off.

BILLY
Good--'cause I figure that unlike those two guys, you play better when you're mad--am I right?

SIDNEY
I'm not listening to you.

BILLY
But you are hearing me--

SIDNEY STARTS HIS STRETCHING EXERCIZES to get loose. He's trying to neither hear nor listen to his rantings.

BILLY WHIRLS HIS HEAD back to the action on the court--

P.O.V. A SHOT BOUNCES OFF THE RIM during a game.

BILLY (cont'd)
(to the court)
You guys still out here throwing up bricks? What is this, a fuckin' mason's convention? Clang! Clank! Nothin' but iron, guy needs a welding torch to play in this league...

SIDNEY
Shut up.

Sidney shakes his head and turns to do further stretching.

DISSOLVE TO:

A MONTAGE OF THE TOURNAMENT - The music and Billy's incessant trash talk punctuate a montage of the tournament.

ANGLE - BILLY STEALS A PASS AND FEEDS SIDNEY - An easy two.

BILLY
Great pass, Billy, thank you very much--

ANGLE - BILLY DRILLS A 20' FOOTER

BILLY (cont'd)
Oughta be a law against being this good--

SIDNEY
Shut up.

ANGLE - BILLY AND SIDNEY IN ACTION - Playing flawlessly as a unit as the animosity between them grows. Somehow Billy's animated intensity, his craziness, helps his unconscious state. Sidney, a model of focussed athleticism, continually tells Billy to "shut up"--never losing a beat in his game.

ANGLE TO THE BILLBOARD - VARIOUS NAMES ARE WRITTEN into the winner's bracket, advancing in the tournament. These include "Dwight the Flight" and "Willie Lewis" along with "Billy and Sidney" and others.

ANGLE - BILLY PLAYING POSSESSED - He's in the face of a WHITE OPPONENT, talking trash.

BILLY
This is Chickie Babe from the Fabulous Forum looking right into the eyes of a honkie yo-yo'ing up and down--gimme the ball!

ANGLE - BILLY STEALS THE BALL from his opponent and flips it behind his back to Sidney who hits a shot.

BILLY (cont'd)
Unbelievable "no-look" pass, eh Stu?

SIDNEY
Shut up.

BILLY
An' the mustard is off the hot dog--

SIDNEY
Shut up.

ANGLE - THE BILLBOARD IS DOWN TO FOUR TEAMS

ANGLE - "THE FLIGHT" AND WILLIE CONTINUE HITTING everything they throw up, gaining in confidence and cockiness with each basket, with each victory.

ANGLE - BILLY TAUNTS THEM from the sidelines.

BILLY
Hey, Dwight the Flight--I want you, y'hear me? That flight's gonna crash--nose down, you listening?

ANGLE - DWIGHT THE FLIGHT AND WILLIE FLIP A FINGER back at Billy. Moments later--Dwight tosses in a jump shot sealing another victory, and:

ANGLE - THE BILLBOARD - TWO TEAMS are left. Billy and Sidney, and "The Flight" and Willie.

ANGLE - THE FLIGHT AND WILLIE POINT at Billy, full of righteous anger and no less cocky.

FLIGHT
Hey you, pasty faced motherfucker, you're ride's over--yeah you!

CLOSE ON BILLY - He barely hears the taunt. He's in a zone. All by himself.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE P.A. ANNOUNCER'S STAND - DAY

As people gather around for the finals--the tension and anger on the court are palpable. It's a good thing no one has a knife or a gun.

P.A. ANNOUNCER
Here we are, ladies and gentlemen, the finals of the Brotherhood through Basketball Tourney...
(beat)
Four fine young gentlemen have made it to this championship round wherein the Coalition of American Corporations, the C.A.C., is putting up five thousand dollars to say "thanks" blah, blah, blah, etc....

As the drivel continues in the background and the sponsors take bows to the disinterested crowd--the gathered fans are staring behind the bleachers...

CUT TO:

EXT. BEHIND THE GRANDSTANDS - SAME TIME - DAY

BILLY AND SIDNEY ARE ALL OVER EACH OTHER VERBALLY--Only a few yards away Dwight "The Flight" and Willie Lewis watch.

SIDNEY
You ever shut up?

BILLY
Whata you care s'long as I'm hitting? I'm in a zone, man, I can't miss. I'm in a zone and you don't wanta get me outta the zone, Sidney, I'm in a zone! I'm in a zone! I'm in a zone!

SIDNEY
It's one thing to embarrass me
but it's another to get the guys
we gotta play against pissed off!
That's just plain stupid!

THE FLIGHT AND WILLIE JOIN IN THE ASSAULT on Billy.

FLIGHT
Listen to your man, Bucket Head,
'cause you gone way past "stupid"
into a new category!

WILLIE
S'called suicide, chump!

BILLY
Call me "Bucket Head" all night
'cause I'm in a zone!

FLIGHT
You be in the fuckin' Twilight
Zone, Bucket!

FANS GATHER - Looking over the back railing of the stands, intrigued and enjoying the display, even encouraging further conflict. This, of course, includes Sam and Dave, now several sheets to the wind.

BACK TO SIDNEY WHO PUSHES BILLY AWAY - Back into a corner, where Dwight and Willie can't see, back where only a few hangers on can observe.

BILLY
They're pissed off and I'm in
a zone! We can't lose--

SIDNEY
Listen to me! Listen to me!
(tough)
This ain't about black and white,
Billy, you hear me?! This is about
<u>green</u>, you got that?! Green,
Billy--<u>money</u>! You hear me?!
(very tough)
I need my half of this five grand
and you ain't blowing it for me,
you got that?

BILLY
You pissed at me?

SIDNEY
Not a bit--you wanta get me mad so I get in a zone with you? You ain't doing much of a job!

BILLY
Fuck them--

SIDNEY
No, Billy, fuck me! Fuck me!

BILLY
Fuck you!

SIDNEY
Good, that's better, that's better!

BILLY
What's this Jimi Hendrix shit? I wanta hear Jimi Hendrix!

SIDNEY
You can't hear Jimi Hendrix!

BILLY
Fuck you!

SIDNEY
That's right!

From a cacophony of shouting and rage, we--

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MAIN COURT - VENICE BEACH - DAY

THE CHAMPIONSHIP GAME - Billy and Sidney against Dwight and Willie. Game in progress--

SIDNEY SLAMS THE BALL HOME to start out the game.

BILLY
(to Sidney)
Showboat...hot dog...

SIDNEY
You got it...

BILLY INBOUNDS THE BALL TO BILLY who squares against Dwight.

FLIGHT
All the sudden you quiet, surf boy--
got nothin' to say?

Billy utterly ignores "The Flight"--addressing Sidney instead.

BILLY
Clear out, Sidney--I got something
to show you...

BILLY STARTS RIGHT, MAKES A SPIN MOVE to his left and makes a driving shot over The Flight.

SIDNEY
You shoulda jammed it.

BILLY
Gimme the fuckin' ball.

WILLIE
You guys ever shut up?!

SIDNEY
We ain't talkin' to you.

FLIGHT
Put the God damn ball in play!

ANGLE ON SPONSORS' TABLE - Much nervous shifting around and many uneasy glances--it feels increasingly like the whole tournament could explode.

SIDNEY INBOUNDS THE BALL TO BILLY who gives it back and works down to the low post, calling for the ball. Sidney finds him with a quick pass--

BILLY MISSES A LITTLE TURNAROUND shot, Dwight the Flight gets the board and flips it to Willie and--

WILLIE DRILLS A 15 footer.

FLIGHT
We're there, Willie--take it
to him.

But Sidney and Billy continue getting after each other, ignoring their opponents.

WILLIE
It's over, fellas--

SIDNEY
Hey, Billy, I been thinkin'...
that girlfriend of yours is a fox...

BILLY
Get off my lady!

SIDNEY
"Lady"? She don't look like no lady...

FLIGHT GOES UP FOR A SHOT - Billy strips him of the ball on the way up, turns and--

BILLY DRIVES TO THE HOOP HARD - Scoring on a reverse layup with his left hand.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Why don't you jam it, man?

BILLY
Jam this!

SIDNEY
My partner can't dunk, you believe that?

WILLIE
You talk too damn much!

BILLY
Don't you talk about my girlfriend or I'll kick your ass...

SIDNEY
You can't jam, can you?

SIDNEY DRILLS A PASS at Billy who immediately nails home a twenty foot shot.

BILLY
(to Sidney)
You cocky, motherfucker--what you got to be cocky about? Huh? Your old lady's lookin' for a job and you're talking shit?!

FLIGHT
You guys talk too God damn much--

SIDNEY
Think how I feel...
(beat)
You know what's really fuckin' amazing, Dwight? Willie? All this talking and we're still beating the
(MORE)

SIDNEY (cont'd)
crap outta you. This white boy ain't embarrassing me--he's embarrassing you.
(beat)
We're kicking your ass.

SIDNEY HITS BILLY with a pass.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
You know how to take care of your woman, don't you, Billy? You know how to treat a woman right, don't you?

BILLY HITS A JUMP SHOT - He looks at Sidney, his eyes focussed in some other world. In athletic terms, Billy's unconscious--at the top of his game--for whatever strange set of magical reasons.

BILLY
I'm in a zone, Sidney, I'm in a zone, gimme the ball...

ANOTHER INBOUNDS PASS - Billy hits a shot.

THEN SIDNEY HITS ONE, THEN BILLY - Exchanging baskets in a brilliant offensive display, quick passes, great anticipation, a flawless two on two exhibition.

ANGLE TO THE SCOREBOARD - The flip-over numbers quickly record the rout, until, mercifully--

BILLY HITS A FINAL SHOT FROM 20 FEET - The game's over.

ANGLE ON THE SCOREBOARD - BILLY & SIDNEY 15
THE FLIGHT & LEGEND 3

BILLY AND SIDNEY ARE ALL OVER EACH OTHER - The corporate sponsors steer them toward the AWARDS TABLE as they snipe.

BILLY
Don't you ever talk about my lady!

SIDNEY
I was keeping you in the zone, Brady Bunch!

BILLY
You weren't playing with my head! I was playing with yours!

THE P.A. ANNOUNCER AND THE SPONSORS gamely try to keep the event from erupting into war among not only the opposing finalist teams, but among the teammates themselves.

P.A. ANNOUNCER
Yes, yes, yes--it's wonderful how the spirit of competition brings out the best in all of us--what made this country great...

BILLY
(pointing to Sidney)
--this guy's an asshole!

P.A. ANNOUNCER
Second place prize money goes to the fine team of Dwight "The Flight" McGhee and Willie Lewis--a check for one thousand dollars!

DWIGHT AND WILLIE STEP FORWARD to genuine applause, and receive the second place check. As they shake hands--

FLIGHT
(to Billy and Sidney)
If the King and the Duck was here they'd kick your butt!

WILLIE
The King'd hammer your ass!

P.A. ANNOUNCER
(gamely)
...thank you, gentlemen. A fine, fine tournament...and now, the Basketball for Brotherhood's First Place prize, the wonderful team of Sidney Green and Billy Hoyt--a check for five thousand dollars...

A LARGE FIVE FOOT LONG CHECK is carried out.

P.A. ANNOUNCER (cont'd)
...our small way of giving something back to the community.

But all hell breaks loose--

BILLY
I played with your mind, Sidney!

SIDNEY
You played with shit!

BILLY
Is it possible to get separate checks?

(MORE)

BILLY (cont'd)
An' your game ain't shit! I could take you apart one on one!

SIDNEY
I'd eat you for breakfast, Brady Bunch--
(beat)
You can't jam, can you? You can't even get off the ground!

BILLY
Fuck you.

SIDNEY
Fuck you.

CUT TO:

INT. OCEAN BREEZE MOTEL - DAY

RHONDA, HER BABY, AND GLORIA are together. Gloria's packing clothes into a canvas travel bag, taking the charts from the wall, packing books.

RHONDA READS FROM AN ENCYCLOPEDIA, helping Gloria study.

RHONDA
Okay, here's one...
(checking a book)
"At least one lane of freeway traffic closed for one hour".

GLORIA
What is a "Sigalert"?

RHONDA
Right! Damn, I never knew what a "sigalert" was...

GLORIA
Named after Lloyd Sigmond--
his friends called him "Sig".

The phone rings.

GLORIA ANSWERS THE PHONE - Rhonda watches nervously. Moments later--

GLORIA (cont'd)
They won! They won! The whole thing!

CUT TO:

EXT. PHONE BOOTH AT THE BEACH - DAY

BILLY'S ON THE PHONE - Sidney a few steps away.

BILLY
Yeah, we kicked butt--Rhonda's there? Just a sec'--
(handing phone to Sidney)
Your wife's there...

SIDNEY TAKES THE PHONE and they switch places.

SIDNEY
Baby? Yeah. We're moving!

CUT TO:

INT. THE MOTEL - DAY

RHONDA HANGS UP THE PHONE - The two women are excited but not giddy.

RHONDA
Y'know, I've been married to Sidney for five years and I'm not sure what he does for a living--but he does take care of me, in his own crazy way...
(beat)
I gotta go. I'm gonna make him a big dinner, candlelight, wine, the whole deal!

GLORIA SHOWS RHONDA to the door.

GLORIA
Thanks for the help. I'll call you when I find a new motel.
(beat)
I'm afraid the Boocher Boys are getting close again.

RHONDA
Call me.

AND RHONDA AND THE BABY leave Gloria at the motel.

CUT TO:

EXT/INT. SIDNEY'S CAR ON PICO BOULEVARD - LATER - DAY

SIDNEY DRIVES AND BILLY'S IN THE PASSENGER seat as they ride home. Nobody speaks.

SIDNEY STICKS A CASSETTE IN THE DECK - And instantly we hear, loudly--

The rap sounds of "Public Enemy" fill the car.

They still don't speak.

THE CAR HEADS DOWN PICO, turning onto Lincoln Boulevard South, rap music blaring.

CLOSE ON BILLY - The music works on him, screwing him tighter and tighter.

CLOSE ON SIDNEY - He watches Billy, he knows the music works on him. Finally:

BILLY
I can jam.

SIDNEY
Good.

BILLY
I mean you keep telling everybody I can't stuff it.

SIDNEY
I was just trying to get under your skin.

BILLY
But I can dunk a basketball-- just 'cause I don't in a game don't mean I can't.

SIDNEY
Fine...

BILLY
You don't think I can.

SIDNEY
I don't care if you can or can't.

BILLY
Stop the car.

SIDNEY PULLS THE CAR to the curb. By now they're on Washington Boulevard headed east.

SIDNEY
Okay.

BILLY
Turn that shit down.

SIDNEY SMILES and turns the music down.

SIDNEY
What?

BILLY
I'll bet your half of the five grand against my half of the five grand that I can jam.

Sidney stares at him like he's crazy. He is.

SIDNEY
(calmly)
Billy, listen to me. Go buy your girlfriend a nice dress in case she gets on that fucking game show, and give the rest of the money to her for safe keeping.
(beat)
You're either stupid or dangerous and I know you aren't stupid 'cause you push my buttons and piss me off and stupid people can't do that.
(beat)
So you must be dangerous.

BILLY
To who?

SIDNEY
To yourself. Take the money and go home.

BILLY
You don't think I can stuff it.

SIDNEY
I'm taking you home.

SIDNEY PULLS BACK out into traffic. But Billy won't stop.

BILLY
The reason I don't stuff in a game is 'cause it's a waste of energy, it's showboating just for the sake
(MORE)

BILLY (cont'd)
of showboating, like a behind-the-back-pass when it's unnecessary--
(relentless)
It goes back to this thing I was saying--quoting myself--"A white man wants to win first, look good second. A black man wants to look good first, and win second--"

SIDNEY SLAMS ON THE BRAKES - The car screeches to a halt. Billy crashes into the dashboard ingloriously.

SIDNEY
That's enough. There's a hoop. Get your money and the ball.

P.O.V. A SCHOOLYARD HOOP in a sea of asphalt.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SCHOOLYARD HOOP - NOW DUSK

SIDNEY AND BILLY ARE ALL BUSINESS - This bet has nothing to do with anything but ego.

CLOSE ON THE TWO CHECKS - Each hand scribbles on the back.

SIDNEY
There. I've signed mine over to you and you sign yours over to me. Whoever wins gets both checks and can scratch out the sign-over. Okay, you done? Lets' go.

BILLY STRETCHES TO GET LOOSE - He's stiffer than he thought.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
You stiff? Good, you oughta be. Only played six games today.

BILLY
I can stuff in my sleep.

BILLY STRETCHES SERIOUSLY NOW - Picks up the basketball, spins it a few times, getting the feel again.

BILLY
Do I get a practice?

SIDNEY
Hell no--you get three tries.

BILLY EYES THE BASKET--He's proven himself as such a quality athlete by now that we can't imagine he can't stuff--yet he's not that tall, 6 feet perhaps, and Sidney's right--he hasn't dunked in any games, so...

CLOSE ON SIDNEY - He's wondering the same things.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
One of us won't be going home tonight.

BILLY DRIVES HARD TO THE BASKET - Goes up, up, and slams the ball--but he jams it into the front of the rim. It falls away harmlessly.

SIDNEY RETRIEVES THE BALL - Flips it to Billy.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
O for one.

BILLY
(to himself)
Almost had it.

BILLY IS DEEP IN CONCENTRATION this time. His nostrils flare, his breathing is quick and concentrated--

BILLY MOVES TO THE BASKET AGAIN - Explodes high, but--

THE BALL SLIPS OUT OF HIS HAND on the way up. He easily grabs the rim to steady himself, but--

SIDNEY
O for two.

BILLY
Fuck me. I had it...

BILLY GRABS THE BALL and with full focus of concentration he returns to his spot. It's obvious that he has the physical skills though because of his height everything has to go perfectly--timing mostly.

CLOSE ON BILLY - The intensity of Karpov and Kasparov. This is it.

CLOSE ON SIDNEY - If he has doubts about the outcome it doesn't show in his manner. Cool as a cucumber.

SIDNEY
Billy...

BILLY
Shut up...

SIDNEY
Billy...

BILLY
Shut up...

SIDNEY
Billy...

BILLY
What?

SIDNEY
White men can't jump.

BILLY CHARGES TO THE HOOP - He leaps up, high, even high enough to slam, but--

THE BALL RICOCHETS OFF THE BACK RIM - Rebounding far away.

BILLY STANDS THERE FOOLISHLY - Feeling like an idiot.

BILLY
(muttering to himself)
I had it...I had it...

SIDNEY PICKS UP THE TWO CHECKS - Holds them up.

SIDNEY
Billy...you're a loser.

BILLY
I'm not a loser...
(beat)
...I'm just bad with money.

SIDNEY TURNS AND WALKS TO HIS CAR, laughing a little to himself at this simple explanation.

SIDNEY
Good luck with Gloria...

BILLY
(defiantly)
I'm the best playground player
in Los Angeles.

SIDNEY STOPS BEFORE ENTERING HIS CAR - Addresses Billy.

SIDNEY
You ain't even the best player
in the Crenshaw District.

BILLY
Who's better?

SIDNEY
Me.

AND SIDNEY DRIVES AWAY - Leaving Billy alone.

BILLY
Way to go, Billy...

BILLY SPINS THE BALL ON HIS FINGER - Like some religious ritual to center himself.

BILLY THEN FLICKS THE BALL OFF HIS FINGER - The ball arcs up to the backboard and spins gracefully into the basket.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD - DUSK

BILLY STARES AT A CHEESEY SHOP - Lots of glitter on the sign.

P.O.V. A SLINKY BLACK DRESS on a mannekin.

BILLY ENTERS THE SHOP - And moments later the MIDDLE EASTERN CLERK climbs into the window to remove the dress from the mannekin.

CUT TO:

INT. SIDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

SIDNEY AND RHONDA HAVE A CANDLELIGHT DINNER with wine, flowers, the whole thing.

CUT TO:

INT. THE OCEAN BREEZE MOTEL - NIGHT

GLORIA'S IN A DRUNKEN STATE - Packed, ready to move, nearly empty vodka bottles are scattered around.

A "ROMANTIC DINNER" HAD BEEN SET up using a night stand as a table, a towel as a table cloth. There were candles, flowers, a pizza--now cold.

BILLY ENTERS - He's holding a box with the dress.

GLORIA
Where've you been? It's been hours since you called! Sidney's home already? The pizza's cold and the wine is warm!

BILLY
It's a present for you.

Silence. She sighs, calms down.

GLORIA
God, what a shrew I am.
(beat)
You've been out buying me a gift
and I'm ranting like some...some...
(searching for the word)
...wife...or something.

BILLY
No, no, it's okay--you can rant.
(to himself)
God knows you soon will...

HE HANDS HER THE PACKAGE - She's calmed down but she's pretty well sloshed.

GLORIA
I mean you and Sidney have been out
there doing battle for your women--
it's Arthurian almost--it's incredibly
romantic, really...and here I am
all stressed out about a cold pizza--
(beat)
I'm sorry, sweetie, tell me about
the tournament!

SHE UNDOES THE BOW ON THE PACKAGE - Billy's starting to sweat.

BILLY
Oh...well...there were some decent
players but me and Sidney played okay.

GLORIA
"Okay"? You musta been great!
(beat)
And the two of you must be
friends again, right?

BILLY
"Friends" isn't exactly the right
word but we're something...

SHE OPENS THE BOX - Pulls back the wrapping tissue, and--

GLORIA REMOVES A SEQUIN COVERED DRESS - It's either low cut or slit up the side or whatever, but it looks more like something from a Salsa Disco in South Philly.

CLOSE ON GLORIA - She's appalled and touched.

GLORIA
It's beautiful.

BILLY
Thank you.

SHE HOLDS THE DRESS UP to show it off.

BILLY (cont'd)
Has Jeopardy called yet?

GLORIA
No. But I called the Associate Producer's office today and gave them the phone number of the new motel we're moving to.

BILLY
We gotta move?

GLORIA
Yeah--I thought I saw the Boocher Boys at the 7-11 down the street. They may be getting close again.
(smiling)
But I guess we could pay them off with the money you won today--I mean rather than wait for the money from Jeopardy--

Silence.

BILLY
Gloria...

GLORIA
Yes?

SHE RELIGHTS THE CANDLES on her makeshift romantic dinner, then rising to turn out the gross, overhead lights. The room is suddenly transformed.

SHE POURS SOME WINE for each of them. Billy's in agony.

GLORIA (cont'd)
Yes?

With excruciating softness--

BILLY
I lost the money.

GLORIA
I can't hear you, honey--speak up.

BILLY
I lost the money again.

GLORIA STARES LONG AND HARD at Billy. She can't quite believe it--she believes it. Finally:

GLORIA
Do you want to run that by me one more time?

BILLY
It...it...it happened again.

GLORIA
"It"? "It"? "It"? What is "it"? There is no "it"! "It" is you! You happened again!

SHE FLIPS THE TABLE UPSIDE DOWN - Candles, pizza, wine, everything goes flying--triggering a drunken rage.

GLORIA (cont'd)
That money was mine to take care of for both of us! That money was gonna keep us going till Jeopardy called!

BILLY
Jeopardy ain't gonna call! When are you gonna fuckin' wake up?!

GLORIA
Jeopardy is gonna call!
(with conviction)
It is my destiny that they call and I triumph magnificently which by the way I never will if I wear that stupid dress which is obviously now a way to soften the news that you fucked up again!

GLORIA FINISHES HER PACKING - Building her rage.

GLORIA (cont'd)
And I'll get on the show and I won't clam up and nobody will stop me because I am overflowing with more useless God damn information than any human being on this planet!
(MORE)

GLORIA (cont'd)
(storming)
It's like a God damn bad tune I can't get outta my head! Everything's a question!
(crazed)
Who is James K. Polk? What is the temperature water boils at Celsius? How many moons in Pluto? What is a Quince? It's a food starting with Q, Billy, and I know seven more!
(desperately)
I can't believe you lost the money!

Billy tries to get in a word but is overwhelmed.

GLORIA (cont'd)
Do you know how hard it is to learn foods with Q? Name the four golf tournaments that make up the Grand Slam? Who is Walter Palanuik? What is a "quark", a "kopeck", a "geek", a "dink"?

SHE PICKS UP HER BAGS - It's an enormous load that includes her research material. She looks like a bag lady.

BILLY
Gloria, calm down...you've been drinking--you drink too much...

SHE STARTS TO THE DOOR then stops and faces him.

GLORIA (cont'd)
Wait. The answer is "Shit-faced"--what is the question?
(imitating a buzzer)
Bzzz, bzzzz! How can a woman live with Billy Hoyt? I got another one. Where is she going? What is the name of her new motel this week? What planet is this? Who cares? Who cares? Who cares?

AND GLORIA STAGGERS OUT INTO THE NIGHT carrying everything she owns.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MOTEL - NIGHT

BILLY STARTS AFTER HER - Nothing will stop her.

GLORIA LUGS HER STUFF out to the edge of the Boulevard.

BILLY
Come back here! Don't leave me!

GLORIA
What is a solar eclipse? Who is Marcel Cerdan? Where was the hamburger invented?

She babbles away as he pleads with her.

GLORIA STICKS OUT A THUMB to catch a ride.

BILLY
You can't hitchhike! This is L.A.? Girls get shot here!

GLORIA
Who was the Black Dahlia? What was the real name of the Hillside Strangler? The Nightstalker? The San Fernando Valley Rapist?

A VAN STOPS RIGHT AWAY - She lumbers towards it.

GLORIA TURNS TO SEND BILLY AWAY - She sees something.

GLORIA
Billy, your carpet is on fire.

P.O.V. INTO THE ROOM - THE CANDLES HAVE IGNITED the carpet. The carpet smolders, smoke rising from low flames.

BILLY
Shit!

BILLY RUNS BACK INTO THE ROOM - Protesting all the way.

BILLY (con't)
Gloria! Don't get in that van! Wait a minute!

CUT TO:

INT. THE MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

BILLY MADLY TRIES to stomp out the flames, but--

CLOSE ON THE AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER - Smoke curls around it.

POP - THE SPRINKLERS COME ON FULL FORCE - Drenching Billy.

HE STANDS THERE BEING SOAKED - He looks out the door.

BILLY
Gloria!

P.O.V. THE VAN DRIVES AWAY with Gloria in it.

BILLY (cont'd)
Gloria!

BILLY STANDS THERE IN THE SPRINKLER watching her drive away.

HE PICKS UP HIS GEAR, all soaking wet, and his basketball, and trudges to the door. As he gets to the door, suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere--

BLAM! HE IS SMASHED IN THE FACE by a forearm.

BILLY FALLS BACK TO THE CARPET, still being rained on, and looks up.

P.O.V. FROM THE GROUND - THE TWO BOOCHER BOYS STAND in the doorway.

BOOCHER BOY #1
You can run but you can't hide, Billy. A nigger said it--y'believe that?

BOOCHER BOY #2
Let's take a ride.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BOOCHER BOYS' VAN - NIGHT

SHAG CARPETTED EVERYWHERE - Floor, walls, ceiling. Sconces, a little wrought iron work--it's a hedonist's pleasuredome.

A RIFLE IS AIMED AT BILLY'S HEAD as he sits on the floor in the back. Boocher #1 drives, #2 holds the rifle.

BOOCHER BOY #2
The running's over...we're here to collect.

BOOCHER BOY #2
We're investors, Billy, and we invested in you. You let us down.

BOOCHER BOY #1
But we hear you won some money today with a basketball. You could always play, Billy--you were the best white boy we saw since the Pistol...

BILLY
I lost the money! Search me!

BILLY JERKS OUT HIS POCKETS to demonstrate they're empty.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIGNAL HILL OIL REFINERIES - LONG BEACH - NIGHT

BILLY STANDS IN HIS UNDERWEAR in the road by the van on an empty industrial road running through--

ENDLESS REFINERIES BELCHING YELLOW SMOKE - Everything lit by amber colored, low pressure sodium lights. Hell.

BOOCHER BOY #2 holds a rifle on Billy as he rummages through Billy's clothes looking for money.

BOOCHER BOY #2
There's no money.

BOOCHER BOY #1
The shave was working, Billy--nobody would've known. Why didn't you go through with it?

BILLY
The guy I was guarding called me a honky motherfucker.

BOOCHER BOY #2
You <u>are</u> a honky motherfucker?

BILLY
But I couldn't let him think he was better than me!

This is an utterly unacceptable, even unbelievable answer.

BOOCHER BOY #1
You may think that is being manly but it is just being stupid.

BOOCHER BOY #2 JAMS THE RIFLE in Billy's crotch.

BILLY
I'll get you the money! Give me one week. You saw I can make some dough if I just don't blow it.

BOOCHER BOY #1
Where's Gloria?

BILLY
She dumped me.

BOOCHER BOY #2
Ah, Billy, don't you know that the pussy is the source of all human suffering? The wellspring of eternal grief?

BILLY
(defensively)
I like girls.

They sigh. He's hopeless.

BOOCHER BOY #2
If we give you a week, and you don't have the money...well...we go after her...

BILLY
No!

ONE OF THE BOOCHERS TAKES A DEEP BREATH, surveying the grim, chemical spewing landscape.

BOOCHER BOY #1
(staring at the scenery)
You know why my brother and I like it down here in Long Beach?

P.O.V. SMOKE BELCHING FROM A PIPE - Yellow and putrid.

P.O.V. FIRE AT THE TOP OF A PIPE burning all night.

P.O.V. LIQUID LEAKING FROM A VALVE through the fence.

BOOCHER BOY #1 (cont'd)
We like it down here because it smells like home.

BOOCHER BOY #1 TAKES A DEEP BREATH - Filling his lungs deeply, satisfyingly.

BOOCHER BOY #1 (cont'd)
You have one week to get the money.

BILLY NODS, standing alone in his briefs.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN BREEZE MOTEL - LATER THAT NIGHT

THE VAN PULLS IN - Billy is shoved to the gravel beside his car. He lands in a heap.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BALDWIN HILLS - DAWN

OIL PUMPERS EVERYWHERE - We might be in Bakersfield. The grasshopper pumpers churning away endlessly.

BILLY'S CAR IS PARKED on top of the hill among the wells.

PAN UP TO REVEAL - The city of Los Angeles all around us, out of the hills to the Crenshaw district and on to the Hollywood Hills several miles away.

CUT TO:

INT. BILLY'S CAR - EARLY MORNING

HE'S JUST WAKING UP - He looks a wreck.

BILLY SITS UP - He looks out to orient himself. He holds his aching head and limbs, looking outside.

BILLY'S P.O.V. - The oil fields lead to the city beyond.

CLOSE ON BILLY - He shakes his head, trying to wake up, and looks in the rear view mirror. A few bruises. Slowly, Billy stumbles through the recitation of a speech.

BILLY
Gloria...please...listen to me.
(composing as he goes)
I know I've botched things time and time again...
(beat)
Take me back. No. <u>Please</u> take me back. I will never touch the money again...

He takes a deep breath and continues.

BILLY (cont'd)
If you don't want to get married, we won't get married. We will never screw, we will only make love...

We hear the recitation of his "take me back" speech over a series of shots of Billy looking for her at several motels.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MOTEL ROW ON SOUTH LA BREA - DAY

BILLY'S CAR CRUISING ALONG a strip of cheap motels.

HE PULLS IN AT THE SILVER SADDLE MOTEL - A 50's delight.

VOICE OF BILLY
If you are thirsty, I will never bring you water. I will sympathize instead.
(beat)
I'm sure I will get it wrong again, but I admit it already and beg forgiveness in advance...

CUT TO:

INT. SILVER SADDLE MOTEL - DAY

BILLY SHOWS A PHOTO OF GLORIA to an uncooperative manager who just shakes his head "No".

VOICE OF BILLY
Whatever, whenever, however--I'm sure it is me who will be wrong. You, however, are perfect...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE GOLDEN SUNSET MOTEL - DAY

BILLY EXITS THE MOTEL - No clue about Gloria.

VOICE OF BILLY
I will even get a job.
(beat)
I used to think that what I wanted most was to walk off any court in the world and have people say "there goes the best basketball player who ever played here"...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CELEBRITY ALL-STAR MOTEL - DAY

AGAIN BILLY EXITS THE OFFICE - No Gloria.

VOICE OF BILLY
--but now I realize I was wrong.
That's the second thing I want.
(beat)
The first thing I want is to be
in your arms forever...

END VOICE OVER of his "Take me back" speech rehearsal, and:

CUT TO:

EXT. THE FIESTA MOTEL - DAY

BILLY EXITS THE MOTEL OFFICE - He looks down the road at a string of similar motels.

P.O.V. MOTEL ROW - A trashy landscape of motels on what once must have been a highway, is now just another boulevard.

BILLY
(to himself)
Ah, fuck it, Billy--she's way
to smart for you...

BILLY BANGS A COKE MACHINE with a well placed elbow. A can of Coke tumbles out.

Suddenly a voice--

VOICE O.S.
You're under arrest.

CLOSE ON A GUN - Stuck in his face.

BILLY WHIRLS - ZEKE STANDS THERE HOLDING THE GUN, dressed in a security guard's outfit.

ZEKE LAUGHS and puts the gun away.

ZEKE
Zeke, remember? Me an' Robert
an' Sidney hustled your ass. You
got the ballbreaker for a girlfriend--

BILLY
Right, right--you arresting me for
stealing this Coke?

ZEKE
Fuck the Coke. I live here.

BILLY
(looking around)
Nice joint...

ZEKE
It's a dump.
(stares at Billy)
Ballbreaker break your balls?

BILLY
She broke my heart.

ZEKE
Heart. Balls. Details, eh?
Personally, I'm looking for an
old fashioned girl. Some
chick wears dresses and don't mind
being taken care of. Hard to find.

BILLY
No shit.
(beat)
Zeke...I might be needing a job.
You know of anything?

ZEKE
The Company me an' Robert work
for is taking applications. Talk
to Robert--he works at a T.V. studio.

BILLY
Which one?

ZEKE
It's on Sunset. They make a buncha
stupid shows there...y'know like
Wheel of Fortune, The Price is Right,
Jeopardy--

BILLY
Jeopardy?

CUT TO:

INT. GUARD STATION - METROMEDIA STUDIO IN HOLLYWOOD - DUSK

BILLY AND ROBERT (IN A UNIFORM) - They watch as cars and trucks come and go. Robert points.

P.O.V. A BLACK PORSCHE SLOWS DOWN AND EXITS - We get a glimpse of the MAN DRIVING THE PORSCHE, THE PRODUCER.

ROBERT
That's him. The Executive Producer of Jeopardy. He thinks he can play--he's a turkey.

BILLY
I owe ya.

BILLY SLAPS FIVE WITH ROBERT and hurries out.

CUT TO:

EXT. VISTA VIEW APARTMENTS - DAY

SIDNEY'S CAR PULLS IN - He gets out, and sees:

BILLY STANDING THERE - Waiting eagerly.

BILLY
Sidney--

Sidney is amazed to see him.

SIDNEY
I can't believe you keep coming back--you're like a fuckin' Yo-Yo.

They start walking toward, and up the stairs.

BILLY
Gloria left me.

SIDNEY
What a surprise--

BILLY
I got an idea how to find her but I need your help with a hustle.

SIDNEY
Count me out. I'm through with that. I got a family to take take care of, I got a lotta jobs I'm juggling...
(beat)
I'm just playing ball for fun now.

BILLY
It'll be simple--

SIDNEY
No.

BILLY
C'mon, man, I'm desperate!

SIDNEY STOPS TO TALK TOUGH TO BILLY at the base of the stairs. As they talk, TWO COPS hurry past them.

SIDNEY
That's your problem--you're desperate. For her, for everything. I love Rhonda more than the sun and the moon but I ain't desperate--a desperate man can't be trusted.

BILLY
You're never desperate?

SIDNEY
Sometimes for my kid. I think you can make an exception for your kids. Maybe not. I don't know.
(beat)
But I don't need to be part of your hustle anymore and if you really wanta know the truth--you oughta get a fuckin' job.

AND SIDNEY STARTS UP THE STAIRS - Billy pleading as they go.

BILLY
Just one more time! I'll owe ya!

THEY STOP SHORT AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS - At the sight of:

THE TWO COPS TALKING TO RHONDA - She's distraught, holding the baby. And Sidney hurries to her, Billy trailing.

RHONDA
They took the T.V.! They took the stereo! They took the baby chair! What kind of a human being would steal a crib?!
(seeing Sidney)
I've been trying to reach you! They took everything!

SIDNEY'S P.O.V. - THE APARTMENT HAS BEEN CLEANED OUT

SIDNEY
Who?

COP
Burglars. Who ya think?

SIDNEY EMBRACES RHONDA but she's distraught, irrational.

SIDNEY
God, baby, I'm sorry...

RHONDA
I feel raped! They took everything! The T.V. was new! They took the baby crib, you believe that?!

SIDNEY
The bastards. Jesus, we'll get everything back--we'll get new stuff, whatever it takes...I promise...

RHONDA
(unconsolable)
You promised to get me outta this God damn building!

SIDNEY
(frustrated, defensive)
I'm working on it, baby, we were almost there...

SIDNEY GOES INSIDE and she follows. He looks around at the devastated room, left in shambles.

CUT TO:

INT. THE APARTMENT - DAY

THE COPS FOLLOW THEM inside, taking notes.

RHONDA
We're back where we started now! We'll never move! I'm getting a job.

SIDNEY
(frustrated)
Then get a God damn job...Christ... I ain't the burglar...

RHONDA PUTS THE BABY DOWN in the middle of the room, and picks up an empty jewelry box.

RHONDA
They took the rings my grandmother gave me! We're moving now!

SIDNEY
We can't just yet--we need a little more money first--'cause of this... it's okay--I'm on the verge.

RHONDA
The verge of what?

As he sifts through the rubble, he loses it a little, and turns to the cop.

SIDNEY
Any chance of getting our stuff back?

COP
Did you have your social security number etched on the bottom of each of your belongings?

SIDNEY
(cynically)
Yeah, I did it in my spare time.

COP
Don't be smart with me!

SIDNEY
Fuck you.

COP
I'll lock you up!

SIDNEY GETS IN THE COP'S FACE - He's ready to go.

RHONDA
Sidney!

COP
Try me!

SIDNEY STANDS TOE TO TOE with the cop, about to lose it.

THE BABY CRIES from the middle of the floor.

SIDNEY
(to himself)
Fuck me...

HE WHIRLS AND PICKS UP THE BABY - And heads out to the balcony to clear his head.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BALCONY OUTSIDE THE APARTMENT - DAY

SIDNEY'S READY TO EXPLODE but he reigns it in, stroking the child. And he sees Billy still standing there. After several moments.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
Okay, I'm desperate. Wanna laugh?

BILLY
I'm sorry.

SIDNEY
I don't want your sympathy. I want a deal.

BILLY
Name it.

SIDNEY
I'll help you. You'll owe me.

BILLY
I'll owe you.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE METROMEDIA T.V. STUDIO - NEXT DAY - DUSK

THE PRODUCER'S PORSCHE PULLS OUT with a brief wave at Robert the Security Guard.

ROBERT WAVES AT SOMEBODY across the street.

CUT TO:

EXT. ACROSS THE STREET - DUSK

BILLY WAVES BACK AT ROBERT in acknowledgement and--

BILLY'S CAR PULLS OUT into traffic, trailing the Porsche.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD - DUSK

BILLY'S CAR TRAILS THE PORSCHE through traffic heading west.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRUMPS RESTAURANT - WEST HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

THE PORSCHE PULLS IN and the Producer gets out.

BILLY'S CAR STOPS NEARBY - Billy watches.

CUT TO:

INT. BILLY'S CAR - NIGHT

CLOSE ON BILLY - He watches the producer carefully.

BILLY GETS OUT OF THE CAR - He straightens his shirt and runs a hand through his hair.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUMPS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

THE PRODUCER SITS AT THE BAR - He's a regular, and we see clearly now he's about 40, a man with the bored cynicism of easy success. Money sticks to him. In many ways this man is the spiritual opposite of Billy.

BILLY ENTERS AND SITS AT THE BAR - A few seats away from the Producer, who doesn't notice him, because--

THE PRODUCER IS EYEING a couple gorgeous women. He motions subtly to the bartender, calling him by name.

PRODUCER
(softly)
Jerry...
(a nod to the ladies)

AND TWO DRINKS ARE SERVED to the two attractive women.

CLOSE ON BILLY - He watches it all carefully.

BILLY
(to bartender)
A beer, please...

As the bartender gets a beer for Billy.

PRODUCER
Jerry...you know their names?

JERRY THE BARTENDER
First timers.

PRODUCER
You can let 'em know who I am...

JERRY THE BARTENDER
I always do...

THE PRODUCER LAYS A HUGE TIP out for Jerry.

BILLY STARES AT THE TIP in disbelief, but without naivete. He's quickly figuring out this world.

JERRY THE BARTENDER WHISPERS something to the ladies as he serves them their complimentary drinks.

BILLY
You're a producer, aren't ya?

PRODUCER
(irritated)
Everybody's a producer. All you need is a phone.

BILLY
I'm an actor.

PRODUCER
(moaning)
Oh God...not another one...

BILLY
No, I mean I got credits.

THE PRODUCER WAVES AT THE TWO WOMEN who ignore him.

BILLY
I know Eddie.

PRODUCER
Eddie who?

BILLY
Eddie Murphy--how many Eddie's are there. He and I play basketball together. I'm not very good but Eddie is. Eddie's a helluva guy.

THE PRODUCER TRIES TO WAVE at the ladies again to no avail--then turns his attention to Billy, with disdain.

PRODUCER
You know shit.

BILLY
Yeah, I know shit. I also know Eddie.

PRODUCER
(to Jerry)
These broads are dead, Jerry--no play at all. You told 'em who I was, right?

JERRY THE BARTENDER
I told 'em.

Silence. The producer is having no luck with the women, so at last he gives a token of intention to this irritating jerk to his left, Billy.

PRODUCER
I play some hoops myself. We got a game every Sunday morning at 11 at Roxbury Park.
(rising)
Come on over. Bring Eddie.

BILLY SHAKES THE PRODUCER'S HAND - And as the Producer leaves, Billy smiles to himself.

JERRY THE BARTENDER
That'll be three-fifty.

BILLY
Sir, I have no money.

AND BILLY CHUGS the remainder of the beer before rising to leave.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROXBURY PLAYGROUND - NEXT MORNING

A BEVERLY HILLS PLAYGROUND - Lush, green, and the players are white, over 30, and ripe. This is basketball for lawyers, accountants, and executive producers. It bears no resemblance to basketball, much less life.

SIDNEY STANDS SMILING BROADLY next to Billy.

PRODUCER
That ain't Eddie!

BILLY
That's Eddie.

SIDNEY
I'm Eddie.

PRODUCER
Eddie fucking Murphy I meant!

SIDNEY
That's me.

PRODUCER
The movie star I meant!

SIDNEY
I'm him.

BILLY
Show 'em.

SIDNEY
Fuck you, honky motherfucker.

BILLY
See?

PRODUCER'S PAL
You ain't Eddie.

SIDNEY
I'm Eddie.

PRODUCER
Get outta here.

BILLY
Let's quit arguing and shoot some hoops.

BILLY THROWS UP AN AWKWARD TWO HANDED SHOT - As purposefully clumsy as he usually is elegant, but--

THE BALL SLAMS OFF THE BACKBOARD AND GOES IN - From the top of the key this is a gross bit of luck, clearly unintended.

SIDNEY
Bro'! Yeah...

ALL THE MEN LAUGH - Billy plays the fool wonderfully.

THE PRODUCER TURNS TO HIS CRONIES and talks to them in confidence. Nobody really thinks he's Eddie Murphy but they're all to insecure, and a little scared, to believe their own convictions. And Sidney plays this knowingly.

PRODUCER
He could be Eddie--I mean guys look different.

PRODUCER'S PAL #1
He ain't Eddie.

PRODUCER'S PAL #2
He don't look like Eddie but maybe he's Eddie...we can't rule it out.

THE PRODUCER TURNS BACK TO THE TWO GUYS who stand there like fools, playing it for all it's worth.

PRODUCER
Billy, here's twenty bucks says you can't do that again.

BILLY
Twenty? Whoa, that's a lot... I dunno...what the hell, eh?

BILLY LOBS UP ANOTHER BRICK - It slams in again. It looks as if he's never had a basketball in his hand.

ALL THE MEN LAUGH AGAIN - What blind luck.

BILLY (cont'd)
(innocently)
Double or nothing?

PRODUCER
Sure, double or nothing.

BILLY PICKS UP THE BALL the right way this time, spins it a couple times, and lofts a beautiful shot through the hoop.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON THE BASKET - Shot after shot goes through.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ROXBURY PLAYGROUND - A FEW MINUTES LATER

BILLY'S JUST FINISHED HITTING SEVERAL shots in a row. He's calm and cool, as always when he has a ball in his hand.

SIDNEY
That's six hundred an' forty dollars--

PRODUCER
You ain't Eddie--

BILLY
Double or nothing one more time.
(tough, cool)
If I miss, you're home free. If I hit, you owe me twelve hundred and eighty bucks and I know you got it.

PRODUCER'S PAL
Blow this guy off, Danny--

SIDNEY
Fuck you, honky motherfucker.

PRODUCER
One more shot. Double or nothing.

BILLY SMILES - And calmly drills another twenty footer.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PRODUCER'S PORSCHE - MORNING

CLOSE ON THE PRODUCER'S WALLET - Digging out cash.

BILLY AND SIDNEY WATCH THE PRODUCER pulling out money.

BILLY
Put it away. I don't want the money.

PRODUCER
What?

BILLY
Instead of the dough I want you to call someone to be on Jeopardy.

PRODUCER
You gotta be kidding--

BILLY
A woman. She's on your list, she passed all the tests in New Jersey, she's been interviewed, she's got a new dress--you have her number, I don't. She'll kick ass.

PRODUCER
(to Sidney)
You ain't Eddie.

SIDNEY PULLS THE GUN FROM HIS BAG - He shows it.

SIDNEY
Then you owe my friend one thousand, two hundred and eighty dollars... honky motherfucker.

A beat.

PRODUCER
What's this woman's name?

CUT TO:

INT. A STUDIO - THE JEOPARDY T.V. SET - LIVE - DAY

The show is beginning, as:

HOST ALEX TREBEK ANNOUNCES the final contestant.

TREBEK
...and Gloria Davis from Paramus, New Jersey.

GLORIA SMILES FROM BEHIND her appropriate game stand. She's wearing the dress Billy bought her.

ANGLE TO THE THREE CONTESTANTS - TWO MEN and Gloria.

TREBEK (cont'd)
We'll visit with our contestants in a few minutes but first, it's time to play Jeopardy.
(beat)
Our categories please.

THE CURTAIN IS PULLED - The categories light up.

SHOTS OF THE BOARD as the host announces.

TREBEK (cont'd)
The categories are--Superstitions, Natural Disasters, Books of the Bible, Sports, and Foods that start with the letter Q.

CUT TO:

INT. THE AUDIENCE - SAME TIME

BILLY SITS THERE with apprehension. Sidney is next to him, looking and feeling utterly out of place.

BILLY
Yeah, Sidney! She knows <u>seven</u> foods with Q!

SIDNEY
(looking around)
If this is what's waiting for me north of Wilshire maybe I'm making a big mistake...

BILLY
It gets worse...

CUT TO:

INT. THE JEOPARDY SET - DAY

THE INTREPID HOST launches the action.

TREBEK
Our champion, Mr. John Andrews, from Mission Viejo, California, will start the game.

MR. ANDREWS
Sports, please, for twenty.

CLOSE ON THE BOARD - A fact is displayed, read by the Host.

TREBEK
Who is the all time leading rebounder in pro basketball history?

ANGLE TO BILLY AND SIDNEY - Mouthing the answer.

BILLY AND SIDNEY
Chamberlain, Wilt the Stilt--
it's Chamberblain, baby...

BZZZZZZZ - Gloria nails the buzzer.

GLORIA
Who is Babe Ruth?

ANGLE TO BILLY AND SIDNEY - Dying.

SIDNEY
Babe Ruth?

BILLY
She's weak in sports, man, she'll be okay...

BACK TO THE SET - THE INTREPID HOST in control.

TREBEK
No, I'm sorry. It's Wilt Chamberlain...

MR. ANDREWS
Let's try a new category--
Superstitions, for twenty.

CLOSE ON THE BOARD - A fact is displayed, read by the Host.

TREBEK
"The breaking of this V-shaped clavicle of fowl--"

BZZZZZZZZ - Gloria pounds her buzzer in mid-question.

GLORIA
What is a wishbone?
(quickly)
Superstitions for forty.

ANGLE ON BILLY AND SIDNEY - Billy's confident now.

BILLY
She's into her shit now--watch this...

CLOSE ON THE BOARD - Another fact displayed.

TREBEK
Evolved from a 4000 year old game of tree tag begun by North American Indians--

BZZZZZZZZ - Gloria is all over the buzzer.

GLORIA
What is knocking on wood?
Superstitions for sixty.

CUT TO:

A MONTAGE OF GLORIA'S JEOPARDY TRIUMPH - Like Sherman marching to the sea, she is indomitable and ruthless.

ANGLE TO GLORIA - Confident and bold.

GLORIA
What is a Quince?

BACK TO BILLY - Animated, fist raised in exhortation.

BILLY
Yes!

ANGLE TO GLORIA - Working up excitement.

GLORIA
What is Ecclesiastes?

BACK TO BILLY - As inappropriate as ever, in the crowd. Sidney winces slightly.

BILLY
In your face!

ANGLE TO GLORIA - It's a slaughter.

GLORIA
Who is Peter the Great?

BACK TO BILLY - Our man.

BILLY
Yes!

ANGLE TO TREBEK - Staggered by her march to victory.

ANGLE TO THE OTHER CONTESTANTS - Bowled over.

THE NUMBERS ON HER TOTE BOARD CLIMB higher and higher.

ANGLE TO GLORIA - On an unstoppable roll.

GLORIA
What is a toadstool?
Who is Pope John the 23rd?
Where are the Outer Hebrides?

ANGLE TO SIDNEY AND BILLY - Sidney watches Billy's enthusiasm with amusement as Billy encourages Gloria to victory.

BILLY
Yes! Yes! Yes!

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE - OUTSIDE THE DRESSING ROOM - LATER

BILLY WAITS WITH SIDNEY OUTSIDE THE DRESSING ROOM, eager to re-unite with Gloria. PRODUCTION STAFF PEOPLE come and go as Sidney lectures Billy.

SIDNEY
Don't be desperate, remember that.
(beat)
If Gloria takes you back--which'd be a miracle--don't blow it. Listen to her very carefully--women know shit. Even if you don't get the words, even if you don't know what the hell she's talking about--<u>listen</u>.

A STAFF PERSON for the show comes out.

STAFF PERSON
She says she doesn't want to see you.

BILLY
What?!

SIDNEY
You're on your own.
(starts to leave)
You owe me one.

BILLY
Yeah...

Billy watches Sidney leave, then--

BILLY SHOVES THE DOOR IN - Gloria stands there.

STAFF WOMAN
Security!

GLORIA LOOKS AT BILLY - He stands there awkwardly.

BILLY
Gloria...
(beat)
I know I've botched things time and time again...please take me back.
(beat)
If you are thirsty, I will never bring you water...
(beat)
I will listen to you even when I don't know what the hell you're talking about...

GLORIA
Billy?

BILLY
Yeah?

A beat. They look at each other.

GLORIA
Let's screw.

THEY EMBRACE - Just as Zeke, the Security Guard, arrives.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SHANGRI-LA HOTEL - SANTA MONICA - DUSK

BILLY AND GLORIA MAKE LOVE on white sheets in a white room, clearly the nicest place they've ever stayed.

PALM TREES SWAY through a window in the background.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE SHANGRI-LA - NEXT MORNING

BILLY AND GLORIA LIE IN BED BLISSFULLY - The room, the light, the breezes off the ocean--everything is different. The desperate urgency to survive, protect the jar full of money, stay a step ahead of the demons, is gone. They delight in each other, completely relaxed.

GLORIA WAKES UP SLOWLY, moans joyfully, like a cat purring, and snuggles her head up against his.

GLORIA
Billy?

BILLY
Mmmmm?

GLORIA
I'm thirsty.

An interminable silence.

GLORIA (cont'd)
Sweetheart?

BILLY
Yeah...

GLORIA
I said I'm thirsty.

Billy takes a deep breath and gives it his best shot.

BILLY
Gloria, I know what it feels like to be thirsty. I, too, have had a dry mouth and I sympathize with your dry-mouthedness. I feel a connection through our mutual dry-mouthedness--

GLORIA
Billy--will you get up and get me a glass of water?

He hesitates, then submits gallantly.

BILLY
I would love to, my sweet...

BILLY HOPS OUT OF BED and retrieves a glass of water for Gloria, without a trace of confusion.

GLORIA
Well done.

BILLY
Thank you...

HE CLIMBS BACK IN BED - She drinks the water ravenously.

GLORIA
Tell me the truth--you never thought Jeopardy would call, did you?

BILLY
I confess I didn't.

GLORIA
You just gotta trust me more.

BILLY
You're right, as usual...

SHE SNUGGLES UP TO HIM - They seem perfect for each other.

GLORIA
I've been thinking about the future--

BILLY
Me too, y'know, the future is a whole new concept...
(beat)
The truth is that the Summer Pro League hasn't exactly been beating down my door...
(beat)
There comes a time, I guess, where you just gotta get on with your life...

GLORIA CLIMBS OUT OF BED and gets her purse, bringing it back into bed with them.

SHE PULLS A WAD of cash from her wallet and counts some out.

GLORIA
I want to take a thousand dollars of my winnings and give them to you...

BILLY
That's a bad idea...

GLORIA
No, it's a good idea.
(beat)
Go buy some nice clothes--not for me 'cause I like you the way you are--but for the job interviews.
(beat)
I want you to aim high.

BILLY
I think I could sell Porsches--now that I've seen how the mind of a Porsche owner works...

GLORIA
What do you mean?

BILLY
Nothin', nothin'...
(beat)
But I'd get nervous taking your money...I might do something stupid with it.

GLORIA
Take it. I trust you.

THEY EMBRACE AGAIN AND ROLL OVER ONTO THE SHEETS as--

WE PAN TO THE WINDOW - The palms and the ocean.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE BEACH - LATER THAT DAY

GLORIA AND BILLY MOVE ALONG IN BLISS - He's on a rental bike. She's on rollerskates, moving slowly with him. The future looks great.

GLORIA
Y'know, you can win five times in a row on Jeopardy before they retire you and bring you back for the annual championship...so I figure if I average 12 thousand dollars for each victory, times five, plus, say, twenty for the annual title...that's eighty grand we'll have...

BILLY
We're rolling now...

GLORIA
And I can start taking acting lessons right away, maybe get onto a soap opera in a year, some t.v. after that, and a feature part in a major motion picture in 2 to 4 years.

BILLY
Easy...

AS THEY GLIDE BLISSFULLY ALONG - A voice shouts out.

SIDNEY (O.S.)
Billy! Hey!

P.O.V. SIDNEY IN THE DISTANCE hurrying towards them.

GLORIA
It's Sidney.

SIDNEY RUNS toward them.

SIDNEY
I been looking all over for you. We gotta talk.
(beat)
Alone.

GLORIA
(gently mocking)
Ohhh...guy talk. Can I watch?

SIDNEY PULLS BILLY TO THE SIDE as she idly spins, off to the side where she can't hear them.

SIDNEY
You got any money?

BILLY
(glancing at Gloria unsurely)
Yeah...I got some dough. Why?

SIDNEY
Eddie "The King" Faroo and Duck Johnson are back. They're working the courts down in Compton and they're cleaning up--

Billy's heart races, his face lights up.

BILLY
The King's back? I can take him.

SIDNEY
It costs a grand to get in--

BILLY
I got a grand.
(beat)
But I don't know...me and Gloria just got back together--

SIDNEY
We can win.
(tough)
Getting this money is gonna save my marriage. With this score I can move in a week!

BILLY
(nods to Gloria)
She won't go for it.

SIDNEY
You owe me.

Billy agonizes. He glances at Gloria.

GLORIA
(lightly)
That's enough man talk--what's up?

BILLY
There's a big game in Compton.

GLORIA
For money?

BILLY
Well...sort of...yeah.

Gloria can't believe what he's considering. She burns.

GLORIA
You're not serious--you're not thinking of playing with my money!

BILLY
You gave it to me.

GLORIA
To help you get a job!

CLOSE ON BILLY - Torn and bewildered, split down the middle between promises.

BILLY
I can double my money right now! Besides, it ain't about the money!

GLORIA
What's it about?

BILLY
I promised Sidney.

GLORIA
You promised me.

BILLY
You can have the winnings. All of 'em. I don't care about the money.

GLORIA
I don't need 'em or want 'em

BILLY
What do you want!

GLORIA
I want you to walk away from the game!

SIDNEY
Gloria, listen to me--we can beat these guys. They're over the hill.

GLORIA
(ignores Sidney)
Billy--you gamble that money and we're through!

SIDNEY
I need this score. It's the last time we do it.

BILLY
(to Gloria)
I promise you, it's the last time.

GLORIA
It's the last time for everything!
(screaming)
I don't believe this! I don't believe this! I don't believe this!

BILLY
You got to understand!

She calms down and speaks with resolute conviction.

GLORIA
No...I don't "got to" understand.

BILLY
This time I won't blow it!

GLORIA
Billy. I love you. Goodbye.

SHE STARTS SKATING AWAY FROM THE TWO MEN - Back up the beach from where they came.

BILLY
(shouting after her)
If you don't wanta watch,
I'll meet you at the hotel
after the game. We'll party!

BUT GLORIA GLIDES AWAY ON HER SKATES - Ethereal, floating, not looking back. And...

BILLY (cont'd)
Gloria! We're on a roll!

SHE GLIDES AWAY from Billy, back up the beach, never turning around to look.

CLOSE ON SIDNEY - He says nothing. He knows.

CLOSE ON BILLY - Watching her glide away.

BILLY
Where's the game?

CUT TO:

EXT. A PLAYGROUND IN WATTS - DAY

EDDIE "THE KING" FAROO AND DUCK JOHNSON own the court, and we see them finishing off another TWOSOME just as:

SIDNEY FLASHES A WAD OF MONEY to the crowd as he and Billy enter, pushing through the crowd with conviction.

SIDNEY
Let's rumble.

EDDIE "KING" FAROO FLASHES HIS MONEY - They both hand it to Leon for safekeeping.

KING
Ebony and Ivory...what is this?
The fucking United Nations?

DUCK
(all business)
To fifteen by ones--make it take--
win by one--shoot for outs.

DUCK PUTS THE BALL DOWN on the asphalt about 25' from the hoop.

BILLY PICKS IT UP AND DRILLS THE SHOT - No problem.

BILLY
Our ball.

THE GAME BEGINS - Billy inbounds to Sidney. Duck Johnson is in his face, and throughout the game it's King and Duck who talk trash--Billy and Sidney just play, without mouthing, with intense concentration.

DUCK
You want some? Come an' get it--

SIDNEY JUKES AND SPINS and hits a soft shot off the board.

BILLY INBOUNDS TO SIDNEY WHO SNAPS THE BALL BACK to Billy who drills a twenty footer. Two zip.

SIDNEY MISSES A SHOT - King sweeps the rebound and hits Duck who fires and hits from outside. Two-one.

KING WITH A POWER MOVE - He muscles it in for another bucket. Two-two. It's a game.

KING
Taste a little of that, eh?
Little facial? Hmmm? It's
over, fellas--

KING TO DUCK WHO MISSES a shot but King follows with a strong tip. Two-three.

DUCK
Yes, yes, yes...this ain't
no "Brotherhood" tournament,
gen'mun--this is some shit--
(announcing score)
Three--two, us.

KING GOES TO THE BASKET - But Sidney springs from nowhere to strip the ball away, feeding Billy who doesn't hesitate but hits a jumper at once. Three-three.

BILLY WITH ANOTHER JUMPER from the baseline.

SIDNEY WITH A SPINNING MOVE across the key.

SIDNEY WITH A TIP of a missed shot by Billy.

BILLY WITH A JUMPER though Duck has a hand in his face.

BILLY WITH A BASELINE drive and a clever reverse layup.

SIDNEY WITH A LONG RANGE JUMPER and the score is Nine-Three.

DUCK
Living in shit, you two--the well's gonna dry up.

AND BILLY MISSES AN EASY JUMPER - King gobbles up the board and clears the ball, setting a pick for--

DUCK WHO NAILS A SHOT and suddenly they're hot again.

KING HITS A JUMP HOOK and tells us about it.

KING
Five-nine--honeymoon's over. No more free lunches---gimme the ball, Duck.

DUCK INBOUNDS TO KING who drives the lane and scores.

DUCK OFF THE GLASS over Billy.

DUCK SCORES FROM THE BASELINE though Billy's all over him.

KING HITS A JUMPER over Sidney's leaping frame.

KING (cont'd)
Nine-nine, fellas. All over but the shouting.

DUCK GOES UP AND SWITCHES THE BALL TO HIS LEFT HAND before hitting a shot off the board. A pro move, big time skills.

DUCK
Ten-nine, us. I want the rock!

KING INBOUNDS TO DUCK who scores again, beating Billy.

DUCK (cont'd)
Eleven-nine...gimme the rock again! I want the ball!

AGAIN KING INBOUNDS TO DUCK JOHNSON who goes straight up in the air and drills it from 18 feet. He's in a zone.

DUCK (cont'd)
Twelve. Give it to me!

AGAIN KING INBOUNDS and Duck goes hard left, stops and pulls up into a 15 footer though Billy is all over him.

KING
Thirteen-nine. Do it to him, Duck, eat him up...

DUCK RECEIVES THE BALL and goes straight up again, but this time Billy's quick hands strip him of the ball on the way up.

BILLY FEEDS SIDNEY QUICKLY and Sidney hits a short shot off the board. Thirteen-ten.

SIDNEY INBOUNDS TO BILLY who fires at once. Good.

SIDNEY TO BILLY AGAIN - He drives the lane and as King collapses on him, he dumps the ball out to Sidney who hits from the free throw line. Thirteen-twelve.

SIDNEY INBOUNDS TO BILLY - The defense is intense now, nobody gives an inch, lots of bumping and holding. Billy whirls and drives the baseline. He goes up for a shot, but:

KING BLOCKS BILLY, THE BALL, HIS BODY - Slamming him hard into the pavement. King looks down at Billy derisively.

KING
Foul on me. Your ball.

BILLY PICKS HIMSELF UP and says nothing, picking up the ball.

HE INBOUNDS TO SIDNEY who hits from outside. Fourteen-thirteen.

SIDNEY
Fourteen-thirteen. Point game.

BILLY INBOUNDS TO SIDNEY - He shoots from outside but misses and Duck flips it to King, back to Duck for a quick two. Fourteen-fourteen.

DUCK INBOUNDS TO KING WHO STARTS BACKING into the low post with the ball, using his size to position himself close to the basket. He spins with a dribble, but--

SIDNEY ANTICIPATES AND STEALS THE BALL and quickly takes two dribbles to clear the ball from King, where--

HE WHIRLS AND TOSSES THE BALL IN THE AIR toward the basket where Billy cuts backdoor on Duck, and--

BILLY SKIES AND GRABS THE BALL in the air and slams it through the basket for the winning hoop. Slam dunk.

The crowd goes wild.

CUT TO:

INT. A BAR IN CRENSHAW DISTRICT - DAY

A celebration...everybody is very up. Music blares. And Billy is a little drunk, surrounded by many of the other players, characters, hustlers throughout the story--Leon, Zeke, Robert, Dwight the Flight, Willie, George, et al, even "The King" and Duck Johnson. A party of mostly, but not exclusively, black males.

BILLY
Gimme Jimi, gimme Jimi, gimme Jimi!
Get that shit offa the music box!
I want Jimi!

SIDNEY
Hey white boy--I didn't know you could jam?!

BILLY
Jam this, mo'fo, jam this!

Sidney's mostly amused at Billy's outrageousness--everybody in the room is in good spirits.

THE KING AND DUCK JOHNSON come up to Billy and Sidney.

THE KING
We want a rematch--money, no money, don't matter--

DUCK
We played ten games before you... my legs were dead.

SIDNEY
You got smoked, Duck, your run is over!

And King and Duck start bickering, blaming each other for the loss.

KING
How you let that pasty sonofabitch backdoor your ass!

DUCK
Backdoor this!

CLOSE ON THE JUKE BOX - Zeke puts in a quarter and hits something by Jimi Hendrix. Almost immediately--

The sounds of classic Jimi Hendrix fill the room.

BILLY (cont'd)
What is this shit?! Get that shit offa the music box!

SIDNEY
That's Jimi.

BILLY
Oh.
(beat)
Fuck me. Love this shit.

SIDNEY
(leaning in)
Billy, I gotta go--

BILLY
We're just getting loose!

SIDNEY
What about Gloria?

BILLY
I won! She'll be thrilled!

SIDNEY
You really think she's gonna still be there?

CLOSE ON BILLY - He sobers slightly.

BILLY
Oh...Jesus...let's go.

SIDNEY AND BILLY EXIT the celebration.

CUT TO:

INT. THE ROOM AT THE SHANGRI-LA - DUSK

BILLY SEES THE EMPTIED ROOM - All her things are gone. Sidney is a few steps behind him.

BILLY
She's gone...

Sidney says nothing, he just watches, as--

BILLY PULLS A WAD OF MONEY from his pocket, waving it.

BILLY (cont'd)
For once I didn't blow the money. I doubled the money and still got it wrong.
(bewildered)
She said some crazy shit once. She said "Sometimes when you win, you really tie...or lose... or when you tie you win or some shit...you gotta extract something from a organic globule--what the hell's going on?"

SIDNEY
Listen to the woman.

BILLY
Listen to the woman?

SIDNEY
Listen to the woman.

BILLY
But I don't got to "hear" the woman, that's what you're--

SIDNEY
No, God damn it! You gotta hear the woman, too!

BILLY
Okay, okay..."Hear the woman"... damn...got it...Jesus...

Then Billy twinkles. He's joking. He's serious.

BILLY (cont'd)
Y'know if we ever went one on one on a basketball court, I could kick your butt...

SIDNEY
I'd have you for lunch--now I gotta go. My wife and kid are waiting.

SIDNEY TURNS AND LEAVES - But Billy stops him as he gets to the door.

BILLY
Sidney!

Sidney turns.

BILLY (cont'd)
Could ya drop me at a cheaper motel?

CUT TO:

EXT. YET ANOTHER CHEAP LOS ANGELES MOTEL - DUSK

SIDNEY'S CAR PULLS IN - Billy gets out, bids Sidney farewell, and--

BILLY HEADS INTO THE MOTEL OFFICE to rent yet another cheap room.

CUT TO:

INT. SIDNEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

THE BURGLED APARTMENT has been cleaned up, a pizza sits on a box being used for a table in front of the ugly couch. A candle makes the most of the situation and slightly warms the desolate apartment.

SIDNEY ENTERS AND DROPS HIS CASH on the counter next to Rhonda who's cutting a pizza.

SIDNEY
We're moving next week--I got plenty--we're outta here, baby...

She screws up her courage and turns to Sidney with words that are difficult. She expects a fight.

RHONDA
Sidney--I got a job.

SIDNEY
Great...
(teasing)
'Bout time you got off your ass...
I mean I've been spoiling you rotten...

CLOSE ON RHONDA - She smiles and shakes her head.

AND SIDNEY PICKS UP THE BABY and holds it up on his hand, the baby standing with rigid legs, balancing, smiling.

SIDNEY (cont'd)
This kid's got great wheels...
he's gonna really get up in the air...

And we begin hearing Sam and Dave singing "Let it Be Me".

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE VENICE BEACH COURTS - EARLY MORNING

BILLY ARRIVES ON FOOT with his bag and a ball.

CLOSE ON THE EVERPRESENT HAT in front of Sam and Dave, no money in it yet--it's too early.

BILLY SITS DOWN IDLY ON THE BENCH - Spinning a basketball. He doesn't even look up when--

ONE OF THE BOOCHER BOYS approaches from nearby.

ANGLE TO THE OTHER BOOCHER BOY who is also watching, and comes over to Billy.

THE BOOCHER BOYS SIT DOWN on either side of Billy who stops playing with the basketball.

BOOCHER #1
We're investors, really, that's all. We invested in you and you didn't come through.

BILLY REACHES INTO HIS POCKET and pulls out a wad of cash.

BOOCHER #2
Well this is something...

ONE OF THEM COUNTS the money.

BOOCHER BOY #1
Almost three grand. This is a very good start.

BILLY
A "start"?

BOOCHER BOY #2
The interest compounds frequently. We need this much more again.

BILLY
(calmly)
I'll get more.

THEY RISE TO LEAVE - Hesitating only for...

BOOCHER BOY #1
We'll be back.

BILLY
I'll be here...

AS THEY LEAVE - ONE OF THE BOOCHER BOYS DROPS a twenty into the hat of Sam and Dave just before--

SAM AND DAVE FINISH THE SONG, pick up the twenty, and call out.

DAVE
Hey, Billy...heard you took
The King to the hole?
(Billy nods)
Got in his face...

BILLY USES THE BALL FOR A PILLOW, lying down on the bench.

SAM
Hey, Billy...you know that I
went to high school with Michael
Jordan--fact is he got the
nickname "Air" 'cause he was in
the air all the time trying
to stop me...
(beat)
Listen to me--I had a fade-away
from the baseline nobody could touch...

DAVE
Fade-away this...

As Sam and Dave's endless banter turns to male braggadocio, we ROLL CREDITS and bring up--

Hit Ray Charles singing cowboy music, or Dwight Yoakum, or Jimi Hendrix, or Sam and Dave...hit them all.

THE END